

# The Unfinished Book of Poetry 2024

poems from five  
**Cork** secondary schools



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



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poetry from five Cork City secondary schools



Comhairle Cathrach Chorcaí  
Cork City Council

**Arts Ealaíona**

Published by  
Cork City Council

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# The Unfinished Book of Poetry 2024



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# Foreword

The 20th edition of this groundbreaking anthology marks a special waypoint in the rich journey that is *The Unfinished Book of Poetry*. A bumper 280 pages replete with courageous, extraordinary, often highly imaginative compositions attests to the unique value this project holds for young writers in Cork city. It has also been published as an eBook, which is easily searchable online.

The 2024 edition features poems from 64 young writers engaged in transition year, representing five Cork city schools. Since the outset, over thirty schools have taken part in the project, the debut edition having been published back in 2005, the year Cork was the European Capital of Culture.

The finished poems are all well-polished, due not only to the zeal, vision and commitment of these young creatives, but also to the diligent tutorship of the five professional assisting writers. Each step of their creative guidance is critical for the course, informing the students on what is possible in poetry while their well-published, award-winning tutors get to coax out the talents of a budding demographic, one which they themselves would love to have been part of in decades gone by. Who knows, it may not be long before student alumni from *The Unfinished Book of Poetry* series have become poetry tutors themselves.

Huge Congratulations to all of the young writers, from:

- Christ King Girls' Secondary School with poet Afric McGlinchey in Tory Top Library and at the school;
- St. Angela's College led by poet David McLoughlin at Cork City Library;
- St. Vincent's Secondary School with poet Tina Pisco at the school;
- Gaelcholáiste Choilm chúram Colm Ó Ceallacháin, i Leabharlann Bhaile an Chollaigh; agus
- Coláiste an Spioraid Naoimh led by poet John W. Sexton in Bishopstown Library and at the school.

With *special thanks* to all the Cork city library staff.

Enjoy!

Paul Casey  
Project Curator, April 2024

# Assisting Writers' Biographies

## Afric McGlinchey

Afric McGlinchey's most recent book is *Tied to the Wind*, a hybrid memoir of her Irish / African childhood (Broken Sleep Books, UK, 2021). Her poetry collections are *The lucky star of hidden things* and *Ghost of the Fisher Cat* (Salmon Poetry), both translated into Italian, and a surrealist chapbook, *Invisible Insane* (SurVision, 2019). The winner of a Hennessy Award, Northern Liberties Prizes (USA) and Poets Meet Politics Prize, among other honours, Afric was also awarded two Literature Bursaries (2017 and 2022) by the Arts Council of Ireland and a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship (2023). A collection is forthcoming in 2025 and she is currently writing a second memoir. Afric works as a mentor for the Munster Literature Centre and offers editing services and online courses via her website: [www.africmcglinchey.com](http://www.africmcglinchey.com).

## David McLoughlin

David McLoughlin is the author of three collections of poems from Salmon Poetry, most recently *Crash Centre* (May 2024). He was recently awarded a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship, and was one of two poets chosen to represent Ireland for 2023 on the Versopolis EU online poetry platform. He facilitates creative writing workshops via Poetry Ireland's Writers in Schools programme and taught extensively across Munster with UCD's Poetry as Commemoration initiative in 2023. [www.davidmcloughlin.com](http://www.davidmcloughlin.com)

## Tina Pisco

Tina Pisco has worked as a professional writer for over thirty years, writing for every medium except radio, but including internet drama and comic books. Her two best-selling novels were translated into five different languages: *Only a Paper Moon* (Poolbeg 1998), and *Catch the Magpie* (Poolbeg 1999). Her short stories

# Assisting Writers' Biographies

and flash fiction have been published in the *Fish Anthology*, *Spolia magazine*, *Colony*, *Aesthetica Creative Writing Anthology* and other journals and anthologies. Her first poetry collection, *She be*, was published by Bradshaw Books in November 2010. *Adolescence2: hormonised poems* was published by Bradshaw Books in October 2011. In 2020-21 she became Cork City Libraries' first Writer-in-Residence and in November 2021 she was awarded the prestigious Frank O'Connor Fellowship from the Munster Literature Centre.

## Colm Ó Ceallacháin

Tá Colm Ó Ceallacháin i mbun na ceardlainne scríbhneoireachta 'Peann agus Pár' i leabharlann Shráid an Chapail Bhuí ó 2018. Foilsíodh dánta leis insan *Strokestown Poetry Anthology 4* agus in *Aneas 1*. D'fhoilsigh Leabhar Breac a dhara cnuasach gearrscéalta, *Ré na bhFathach*, i 2021, leabhar a bhain áit amach ar ghearrliosta Leabhar Gaeilge na Bliana ag an Post Book Awards, 2021. Ghnóthaigh a úrscéal *Fiche* an chéad duais d'úrscéal liteartha ag Oireachtas na Gaeilge, 2023, chomh maith leis an duais do bhuaic-shaothar próis na bliana ag an gcomórtas céanna.

Colm Ó Ceallacháin has been facilitating the Irish language writing workshop 'Peann agus Pár' in the Central Library, Grand Parade, since 2018. His poems have been published in the *Strokestown Poetry Anthology 4* and in the journal *Aneas*. His second collection of short stories, *Ré na bhFathach*, was published by Leabhar Breac in 2021, and was shortlisted for Irish language book of the year at the An Post Irish Book Awards, 2021. His first novel, *Fiche*, won first prize for a work of literary fiction at Oireachtas na Gaeilge 2023, as well as winning the overall prize that year for all works of prose.

# Assisting Writers' Biographies

## John W. Sexton

John W. Sexton was born in 1958 and is the author of nine collections of poetry, the four most recent being: *Futures Pass* (Salmon Poetry, 2018), *Inverted Night* (SurVision, 2019), *Visions at Templeglantine* (Revival Press, 2020), and *The Nothingness Kit* (Beir Bua Press, 2022).

He also created and wrote the science fiction comedy-drama, *The Ivory Tower*, for RTE radio, which ran to over one hundred half-hour episodes. His novels based on this series, *The Johnny Coffin Diaries* and *Johnny Coffin School-Dazed* are both published by The O'Brien Press, and have been translated into Italian and Serbian.

He has recorded an album with legendary Stranglers frontman, Hugh Cornwell, entitled *Sons of Shiva*, which has been released on Track Records. He has been nominated for The Hennessy Literary Award and his poem "The Green Owl" won the Listowel Poetry Prize 2007 for best single poem. He was awarded a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship In Poetry for 2007/2008. For the period of twenty years from 2001 he was one of the most requested writers working under Poetry Ireland's Writers-In-Schools Scheme, and was also editor of the Kilkenny Arts Office online poetry journal for teens, *Rhyme Rag*, from 2014 to 2015.





## Christ King Girls' Secondary School

Poetry by

**Abbie Foley**

**Alisha Zafar**

**Amy O'Sullivan**

**Aoibhe Sheehan**

**Ava Cahill**

**Cassandra Fitzgerald**

**Clodagh Morrison**

**Ellie Patterson**

**Khawar Bilal**

**Leona Waugh**

**Niamh Walsh**

**Sadhbh O'Connor**

**Saoirse Barry**

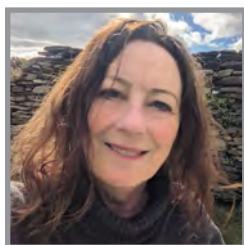
**Sarah Whooley**

Assisting Writer: Afric McGlinchey

T.Y. Coordinator: Mary O'Leary

Workshops held at Christ King Girls' Secondary  
and Tory Top Library

Assisting Librarian: Deirbhile Dennehy



The Christ King students were a perfect micro-climate of adolescent girlhood, veering from intense shyness to bravado, laughing reminiscences to profound revelations. Quiet at first, they began to warm up after I got them to pair up for the first poetry prompt. Over the following weeks, they grew livelier, more receptive to having a go with forms: villanelles and haiku and list poems, pantoums and sonnets and mad dada poems. And with subject matter too. Using model poems as launching pads, the girls dived into totemic objects, rebellious poems, personal idiosyncrasies and family dynamics. Some of the poets whose work we read included Paula Meehan, John Ashbery, A.E. Stallings, Blas Falconer, Matthew Dickman, Victoria Kennefick and Patrick Holloway, among others. We had fun with word play and similes and I brought in some metaphor dice for them to use too.

Considerable trust is involved in sharing poems in a group, and I was very proud of the girls for the support they showed each other when vulnerabilities were shown. At any and every moment, we are mutable beings, and what's true of us today might not be true tomorrow. This is particularly the case with teenagers. It's not for nothing that this school year is called Transition Year. Adolescence is a threshold, a transitional phase of life, a time when emotions are felt more deeply. I felt honoured to have been trusted with these poems, and I hope readers of this book will be aware that they were written in the spirit of the moment.

A big challenge for this age group is standing in front of an audience and reciting their own work. So, for the final session, we had a practice run. I got them to read slowly, to project their voices, to plant their feet on the ground like a tree. Hopefully, they won't have forgotten by the launch date!

I was moved and delighted by the range of poems and writing styles, the honesty and the humour. Here are some of my favourite lines from each girl:

Abbie: 'Velvety deer bend down to the growly river.'

Alisha: 'The rain falls without hearing itself.'

Amy: 'Like the feeling of hearing the school clock tick tock, striking the first hour of summer.'

Aoibhe: 'Headphones are like soldiers protecting from attack.'

Ava: 'Even though you steal my clothes & make-up, I still love you.'

Cassandra: 'Your own muffled world of thoughts.'

Clodagh: 'The wind keeps blowing, and the moment passes by.'

Ellie: 'The romantic gates open their hearts to newcomers.'

Khawar's temper, 'Like a long flame coming unexpectedly out of a lighter.'

Leona: 'Just yesterday, my fingertips barely reached the kitchen shelves and I couldn't tie my laces.'

Niamh: 'But then the song ends, the outside has returned. Time to wake back up, ember to flame, and burn.'

Sadhbh: 'Chapped hands from the cold and sore mouths from the talking.'

Saoirse: 'The waves pulled the sand into the water.'

Sarah: 'Snow was falling and you were holding a book.'

It's been a delight working with the girls. I found their output fresh and poignant, and as you can see, there's promising potential in this group. I hope the project has helped to develop their writing skills, and sparked a creative fire too.

**Afric McGlinchey**

# Poems

Christ King Girls' Secondary School



## The music in the background

*Abbie Foley*

The sun is rising.  
I haven't slept.  
Every lyric hits my soul.

As I watch  
the world grow brighter  
I sense that everything

that's burdened me  
has left, and things will soon  
be good again.

## Dada poem

*Abbie Foley*

A careful wind buckles  
the tricky, plentiful leaves,

and velvety deer  
bend down to the growly river

while a salty bird  
sips from kinetic rain.

## After the incident

*Abbie Foley*

I think I will go home,  
for dams have to break  
and I will soon be flooded.  
Better now than later,

for dams have to break.  
I hold my breath and think  
better now than later.  
Though I don't like getting wet,

I'll hold my breath and think  
I must prepare myself.  
I don't like getting wet  
but the water always dries.

I must prepare myself,  
for time is ticking by,  
and the water always dries.  
Still, I'm filled with fear.

And time is ticking by  
and soon I will be flooded.  
I am filled with fear –  
I think I will go home.

## Haiku 1

*Abbie Foley*

The air is chilling.  
The sparrow's song can be seen.  
Winter's here again.

## The jar of shells

*Abbie Foley*

My mom has always loved the sea.  
She'd take us every weekend.  
She says it gives her peace.  
Once we found a beach covered in yellow shells.  
We collected handfuls, filled a jar up to the brim.  
We keep it in our mobile home, located near the shore.  
Her family had one too, when she was little.  
They'd stay there every summer.  
She speaks fondly of those memories.

Now I understand her close connection,  
deep sense of joy when she hears the waves  
crashing on the shore. It's because, for a moment,  
she's that little girl again, collecting pretty shells.



## Explaining my thoughts

*Abbie Foley*

Like a lit match, one sparking another, until everything's on fire.  
Like shouting in a cave, sounds bounding around and echoing back.  
Like dropping a ball of wool, unravelling and unravelling.  
Like spilling a bucket of marbles, rolling, rolling, hard to catch.

## Little stars

*Abbie Foley*

In this life there are motorbikes and carpentry.  
But there is also love.  
I miss you two little animals  
running around, beating me up  
begging for piggyback rides  
and roundabouts  
sneaking out to watch funny cat videos  
way past bedtime  
crying until I pull a funny face  
and change your mood  
driving mini motorbikes until day turns to night  
creeping outside to look at the stars –  
my little bomber and basher,  
which you will always be to me.

## It's different now

*Alisha Zafar*

Autumn disappears, taking  
its blindy beauty along with it.  
The kaleidoscope of yellows, oranges,  
greens and reds that used to be here,  
have now altered to brown, crunched-up  
leaves, ushering in a new chapter.

While Fall enabled us to see  
the beauty of change,  
how must one *fall*  
to rise again  
for a better, fresh  
new beginning?

It's different now. I've learned  
to take solace and understanding  
from autumn itself.  
If familiar patterns arise,  
take the opportunity to alter and change  
yourself. Seize it.

## Haiku

*Alisha Zafar*

The crunched up, lively  
leaves of autumn dancing in  
the wind. Let them dance.

## The music in the background

*Alisha Zafar*

The music in the background moves like the sea, calm and gentle, bringing a wave of relief. As I listen to the slow song, things resurface in my mind. It feels as if the music is slowly transferring its calmness to these sad moments, making something positive out of them. Even magnificent.

As I sit still  
listening to this song, nothing feels  
out of place. All is well.

## The future is an impossible thunderstorm

*Alisha Zafar*

Fog lingers in the air,  
cloaks the sight beyond,  
each step, irreversible

cloaking the sight beyond  
questions, given answers.  
Each step is irreversible.

Questions, different answers,  
still a never-ending thirst.  
And more lies up ahead.

## Until

*Alisha Zafar*

I'm too tired to break  
into the room, break  
away from the moon and you. Break  
open the stars, break  
through the urges, break  
from the night, break  
open that door, until it's the break  
of dawn.

## Wind and Rain

*Alisha Zafar*

The clouds break down,  
into rain  
which roams with the sound  
of a huge wind rushing.

The wind rages, carrying its burdens,  
while the rain falls  
without hearing itself  
void of thought or emotion, simply  
letting go.

## Rule of Three

*Amy O'Sullivan*

The bowl, the cereal, the spoon.  
Why is the spoon never mentioned?  
Hard, cold and stubborn,  
it won't accept anything less than its place.  
Without cereal, the spoon gathers the milk.  
Without milk, the spoon gathers the cereal.  
But without the spoon  
the task of consumption is difficult.  
With no spoon,  
there's no eating from the bowl  
of cereal;  
there's no fuel.

## There's a child lying in the flowers

*Amy O'Sullivan*

smelling the pollen in the air.  
Eyes closed, losing a sense.

But the scents and the feeling  
of spiky grasses are emphasised.

The sounds of buzzing bees flying high.  
This is a memory that will fade,

the way winter freezes out the sweetness  
of summer and the joy of youth.

## Glow in the dark

*Amy O'Sullivan*

The brightness of the night. Minuscule, knitted fireflies. A loud, lively glow. The shine washes out the dull in a room of emptiness. Frosty air looms over fields. Heavenly, intricate snowflakes plummet into microscopic, humble ice. Contained safely, her room is an artistic burrow, warming, joyful as cotton light. An oven of comfort, to escape the fright.

## The Medal

*Amy O'Sullivan*

My mom gave me a necklace – a miraculous medal to be precise. It's just a simple little Virgin Mary. I noticed the M for Mary carved on the back. I look into it as if it's a mirror. I imagine my reflection through its shiny hard silver glimmer. I scrape my fingernail around its bumpy edge if I'm stressed or nervous. Years have passed since my mom handed it to me. With its pretty chain, it's become something I wear for safety. A chain that I'd wear to match earrings is now a chain I need earrings to match with. I wear it morning, noon and night. As I reflect on everything my mom sacrifices for me, I think about the necklace, the love and protection it represents. And decide that the M is not for Mary, but for Mom.

# The last time always happens now

*Amy O'Sullivan*

Our last summer.

Cool, splashing waves, smacking our faces awake,  
travelling through tranquil waters on paddle boards,  
passing rigid wooden engraved oak trees.

Cool, splashing waves, smacking our faces awake.

Hiking through fields, flowers galore,  
passing engraved oak trees.

Sun rays beaming through gaps in the shade.

Hiking through fields, flowers galore.

The smell of cool vanilla enclosed in a waffle cone.

Sun rays beaming through gaps in the shade.

I'll never forget this.

The smell of cool vanilla enclosed in a waffle cone.

I know it will be a future memory

and already feel nostalgia.

It was, it is, it will be.

I know this will be a future memory:

travelling through tranquil waters on paddle boards.

It was, it is, it will be

our last summer.

## School ghost

*Amy O'Sullivan*

Its white cloak  
drapes over the wooden desk chairs.  
It watches the children  
as they feast on their lunch.  
Oats and water.  
Its vaporous body drops  
to the floor.

## Alone in a field

*Amy O'Sullivan*

The grand, dilapidated sycamore  
stands tall, alone in a field  
where children's laughter echoes.  
as they climb the engraved,  
intricate branches.

Builders gather, axe in hand.  
Nine swings later, the tree begins to sway.  
What memories does it hold,  
that grand, dilapidated sycamore,  
lying alone in a field?



## Trying to explain my happiness when I'm with my friend

*Amy O'Sullivan*

Like a child on their 10th birthday, blowing out the stripy candles.

Like a dandelion waiting for its feathers to be plucked from its head  
to grant a wish for a hopeful soul.

Like the feeling of hearing the school clock tick tock,  
striking the first hour of summer.

Like a piece of pink confetti glimmering into the sky

Like the first snowflake to fall into winter, with its own unique, intricate detail.

Like dropping down the rails of a rollercoaster,  
the wind whirling through your fingers and hair,  
glee screaming from your throat.

## The music

*Aoibhe Sheehan*

The faint sound of chatter is drowned out by headphones, as I observe all the motions of the bus without the hectic sounds. Headphones are like soldiers protecting from attack.

Listen to the music  
amidst all the madness  
on a winter's day.

## He got down on one knee

*Aoibhe Sheehan*

The burst pipe made a hissing sound  
as water came pumping out of it,  
spilling behind the wardrobe.

Luckily, my neighbour is a plumber.

He got down on one knee  
and looked at the sharp piece  
broken off the pipe.

He took a snip of metal  
and melted it  
using a really high temperature.

He covered the pipe with purple wrapping.  
It won't happen again, he assured us,  
still on his soaking knee.

## While the long days shorten

*Aoibhe Sheehan*

An arty, lonely mouse sits all day watching the world go by.  
A firefly cracks sparks of red and blue.  
Sensitive caves sit under the fragile cliff, waiting for a visitor.  
A stork strokes frantically, searching for prey in the salt-enhanced ocean.

## Sorry is a simple word

*Aoibhe Sheehan*

I say sorry for wiping my feet on the freshly mopped floor,  
or missing an easy point in a match.

I say sorry to my brother for taking his charger,  
or to my teacher for messing in class.

I say sorry when I am not even in the wrong.

Sorry is a simple word to say,  
but a hard word to mean.

## The timelessness of tradition

*Aoibhe Sheehan*

Snow falls. Children sing carols.

Families return home for the holiday.

Trees are costumed with baubles and tinsel and lights.

The timeless star sits on top.

Families sit down to a feast: turkey, Brussels sprouts, and carrots.

Crackers are pulled for their trinkets, paper crowns and their jokes.

Siblings squabble over whose presents are better,

while Dad sleeps in front of the fire.

And that's it for another year.

## What I didn't know before

*Aoibhe Sheehan*

walking through the car park tonight,  
feeling the cold on my fingers ,  
and noticing my heavy breath in the air,  
was how stressed I'd be feeling.

I prepare myself for the worst.  
Confident on the art side,  
but nervous in my stomach  
about everything else.

How quickly it's over – like the vapour  
of my breath vanishing like dust.

Done.

And it wasn't unbearable.

Now I get to enjoy the satisfaction  
of having passed all the tests.  
Drink my cold water and shower  
all stresses away.

# Flight

*Aoibhe Sheehan*

An empty field, where flowers crowd,  
and silence in the air.

An old and tattered farmhouse  
sitting idle, bleak and bare.

And silence in the air  
and grief left on the farm  
sitting idle, bleak and bare,  
while neighbours gather round.

And grief sits on the farm  
for the last to leave the nest,  
while neighbours gather round  
and last goodbyes are said.

For the last to leave the nest,  
nervous energy builds up.  
And last goodbyes are said.  
Australia, next.

Nervous energy builds up  
in the old and tattered farmhouse,  
Australia, next, after  
the empty field, where flowers crowd.

# Snow

*Aoibhe Sheehan*

Snow is falling fast now.  
The clouds are dim and black.  
Fresh powder consumes the night sky.

Children play, forming spheres  
and cheerful snowmen appear.  
Snow is falling fast now.

I break from the group.  
There's a chill in the air.  
Fresh powder consumes the night sky.

Stars are hidden behind darkness.  
There isn't a sound.  
Snow is falling fast now.

Faster and faster, like a greyhound,  
it doesn't stop.  
Fresh powder consumes the night sky.

Everything is light and bright  
but I can't breathe, I'm trapped.  
The snow is falling fast now.  
Fresh powder consumes the sky.

## Sisters

*Aoibhe Sheehan*

I love my sister  
well, sometimes I do.  
Sometimes she breathes too loudly,  
which can really annoy me.  
But we make up.  
Or I take something I shouldn't.  
This kinda thing happens a lot,  
and another war starts.  
Well, nothing violent (most of the time).  
Sometimes we get along.  
We've been known to talk for hours,  
like old women.  
When we were young, we'd sneak  
into each other's room late at night.  
We don't have to sneak any more.  
I love my sister, well,  
sometimes I do.

## Trying to explain my disorganisation for the first time

*Aoibhe Sheehan*

Like clothes spread across my bedroom floor,  
in a similar thickness to tropical trees in the Amazon.  
Or like pages upon pages of crumpled up sheets in a school bag  
that will never be found. Or like ecstatic children on a bouncy castle.  
Or like meeting and messing with new friends.  
Or like checking through a shop's stock after a winter sale,  
all the jeans mismatched with the bags and coats.  
Or like your hair after being out in a thunder storm,  
all matted and tangled, a chore to undo.

## The music in the background moves like the sea

*Ava Cabill*

I am surrounded by the loud, chaotic and busy city. I hop onto the crowded bus, filled with babies crying, chatter, phones owned by people who don't seem to understand that headphones are a thing, shouting kids, talking loudly. I put on my headphones, and the music playing takes me away from the noise and chaos. It's like I'm floating in a sea of tranquility.

Noisy surroundings.  
I drown it out. With my  
music, I find peace.



## Haiku

*Ava Cabill*

Leaves cover the ground.  
The winter trees are bare now.  
Frost is in the air.

## Older and slower

*Ava Cabill*

My grandfather called me  
into the living room.  
He needed help to stand.  
I grabbed his firm hand  
  
and he pulled himself up  
onto his two feet.  
He reached into his back pocket  
and gave me some money.  
  
I wanted to give him oil  
for his rusty joints  
after all his years of hard labour,  
digging, ploughing and boxing.  
  
I don't know him that well.  
I wish I could have had more  
time, before he shuffled  
out of the room.

# My sister

*Ava Cabill*

To my younger sister  
who was born when I was two  
and stole my toys and dresses  
without even a clue.

Later, when I was five  
and you were only three,  
we'd play and sit together,  
and watch loads of TV.

We had so much in common back then,  
spent all day, every day  
quite liking mermaids and fairies,  
but it was princesses all the way.

As we grew older,  
and life got busier  
our interests changed  
and now don't spend so much time together.

But our bond is as strong as ever.  
I don't know what I'd do without you.  
Even though you steal my clothes & make-up,  
I still love you.

## My brother can't sit still

*Ava Cabill*

like a jar of jumping beans that never get tired,  
like the heart constantly beating,  
like when popcorn is cooking, then violently pops  
and bounces right out of the pot, like  
a dog full of energy, excited to go on a walk,  
like the waves of a sea, even when calm, always moving,  
like the hustle of everyday life, how the earth  
won't stop spinning,  
and the yellow sun won't stop shining,  
my brother can never, never stop  
moving, because...

## The music in the background

*Cassandra Fitzgerald*

The lyrics roll off the tongue fluently.  
The music consumes you  
in your own muffled world of thoughts.  
It relates to you.  
As you lie there, still,  
and the teardrops swell in your eyes,  
you finally feel understood.  
The world is now calm.

## Blue

*Cassandra Fitzgerald*

*Between my finger and my thumb,  
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.*

–Seamus Heaney

A swallow sails overhead, the memories  
of its path clear in its mind.

The crisp air tickles my lungs  
as I watch the creature fly with haste.

A salty smell lingers in the breeze.

My boots make a subtle squelch  
along the shore.

And I am transported  
to another world. I lift a sandy stone,  
rest it between my finger and my thumb.

A large unexpected wave  
looms. I turn just as it crashes over me  
and I'm jolted  
Awake.

## Haiku

*Cassandra Fitzgerald*

The sky is clear blue.

The cold winter air is fresh  
as the fire blazes.

## Scholarship girl

*Cassandra Fitzgerald*

She was short, ginger, talkative. She attended a language club. She was clever, determined, stubborn. She once had two siblings. Things you wouldn't put with a girl like her. They were impressed by her attitude. So much had happened, yet she walked with the breeze entangling her hair, as though she had not a care in the world. Yes, she was clever, determined, stubborn. But she didn't understand that you can't expect to walk into college life and get praise. Admiration. Or compassion.

## What I didn't know before

*Cassandra Fitzgerald*

was how much a bad performance affects me.

It makes me feel worthless and upset.

It makes me feel like all I've learned  
has vanished from my memory.

I forget even the basics.

I listen to the pang of the bin  
once the crumpled up ball of paper hits it.

I poured an hour and a half  
of my soul into that paper.

Trying to show the best  
of my last three months of work.

I take the sheet out of the bin and uncrease it.

The big red circled number hurts my eyes.

I stare at the red until it flows with my tears.

## *Only know you love them when you let them go*

*Cassandra Fitzgerald*

I'm sorry I didn't let go  
earlier. I apologise for that.  
It's hard to let go  
of something that you feel  
isn't over yet.  
My friends did their best  
to help me forget,  
But how could they understand?  
Still, I pestered them constantly.  
To my friends I say sorry, too.  
I wish it had been easier  
to forget.  
To let go, as easily  
as the breeze that floats  
so gently  
away from me.

## Whale of a problem

*Cassandra Fitzgerald*

It trickles from the sheeting above me, my milky umbrella saving my indigenous shoes. I come to the place I know so well, where the bright river flows. I wonder why the rich people have ignored this fragile place. As they drive by in their notorious SUVs, the optimistic window of one car rolls down. A large bag filled with radioactive waste is tossed into the river. I watch the bag float like a glum whale growing huger.

## Special things

*Cassandra Fitzgerald*

As I sit on my bed with the copy open,  
the one with my secrets and thoughts,  
the special things you gave me,

I re-read what I've written about you.  
I smile as I see what you have written about me  
as I sit on my bed with the copy open.

I miss the touch of your hand in mine.  
I miss the warmth in your red rosy cheeks.  
The special things you gave me.

I read on and become more engrossed.  
The feeling of you not around is draining.  
As I sit on my bed with the copy open,

I grow upset, remembering  
you and everything you've done.  
The special things you gave me.

I wipe away the salty stream,  
missing everything about you  
as I sit on the bed with my copy open.  
The special things you gave me.

## I'm sorry, but

*Clodagh Morrison*

I'm sorry that you now feel alone,  
but that's how I felt even when we were together.  
I'm sorry that you've begun to hate yourself  
but I've hated you for much longer.  
I'm sorry that my brother hit you,  
but your words hurt more than any fist.  
I'm sorry that you never got your hoodie back,  
but you only gave it to me to hide the bruises.  
I'm sorry for all of this, but I'll never  
be sorry for cutting you out of my life forever.

## All at the same time

*Clodagh Morrison*

A child has lost their mother.  
A girl has graduated school.  
A baby cries for the first time.

Each moment passes by,  
like the wind sweeping through the air,  
invisible, different for each person.

The child grows up,  
the girl becomes a doctor,  
the baby's first cry was also its last.



Yet the world keeps moving,  
the wind keeps blowing,  
and the moment passes by.

## What I didn't know before

*Clodagh Morrison*

was the feeling of sadness.  
How *sad* I felt, sitting alone at school,  
thinking about how long I had to sit here,  
bored and tired and lonely.  
I stared at the clock and willed it to move faster.  
Wishing and waiting.  
That's how I felt when I wasn't with you.  
You made me feel so alive and free.  
I didn't recognise myself without you.  
You brought out the real me.  
The happier me, not the girl  
who sat by herself, wishing her life away.  
You wouldn't recognise her.  
You didn't know her.  
You knew me. Until you didn't.

## Last Chance

*Clodagh Morrison*

I walked in, made eye contact with the teacher, and made for my regular spot.

As usual, he sat at the back. He looked excited, jittery, nervous.

We were instructed to open our books. *Stop talking, listen up.*

I stared out the window, watching prams, cars, buses.

The class went by quickly. Finally, the bell rang.

He stood up, sighed, closed his schoolbag. At the door,

we smiled at each other. Mine was fake. So was his.

Without saying a word, we walked out of our last class together.

## And what of the sky?

*Clodagh Morrison*

Bare communal glaciers  
smash their luminous, hyper teeth.

Coarse, dirty twigs  
mix with flimsy windows.

Antsy, dreary deltas cheer  
for the oozy popcorn.

Extravagant, boneless grasshoppers  
swerve against fragile, hilarious swans.

An airy, dull chimpanzee hops into  
monstrous, noisy water.

## The bright winter sun shining through trees

*Clodagh Morrison*

I was scrolling on TikTok,  
feeling happy as a duck in a pond.  
My mother was working hard in the kitchen.  
'If you don't have god in your life, you have nothing.'

'The pen, the book and my hand'.  
I watched as the huge wave came crashing.  
My sister and I on the pitch,  
the song with its melancholy tone.

## Before the break

*Clodagh Morrison*

I break open the car door  
and see your face smiling back at me.  
You break out in fits of laughter,  
because I break your Kitkat wrong.

You've decided you need a break, so you break into  
your trust fund to buy a one-way plane ticket.  
You say you have to break away from this country, these people.  
I can feel my heart break a little.

During our call, you start to break up.  
I try not to break down in tears  
when you announce that you think it best if we break up.  
I guess it wasn't just a break after all.

# Betrayal

*Clodagh Morrison*

You were the love of my life, after all.  
Or at least, so I thought.  
I'll never look at you the same  
after that one night.

Or at least so I thought:  
we would grow old together.  
Until that one night  
when I saw you kissing her.

We would grow old together??!  
We were *engaged*.  
When I saw you kissing her,  
my heart began to break.

We were engaged,  
and planning our wedding.  
My heart began to break.  
I'd never felt more betrayed.

We were planning our wedding.  
Now I'll never look at you the same.  
I'd never felt more betrayed.  
You weren't the love of my life after all.

## Trying to explain anger for the first time

*Clodagh Morrison*

Like two dogs circling each other, barking and refusing to back down  
like a violent thunderstorm thrashing through the clouds,  
getting louder and louder as it moves across the sky

like the sound of gunfire spraying and instilling fear into those close by  
like a wild beast that cannot be controlled, caged in, snarling and hissing

like a volcano that suddenly erupts, red hot lava spilling out everywhere,  
burning everything in its wake.

## The wish

*Clodagh Morrison*

I watch her lift the pink glass bottle of Chlo  perfume and spray three times: on either side of her neck and once on her wrist. I would politely ask to use her favourite perfume, but always got the same response. I was too young. She told me that one day I'd be old enough and then I could use all the perfume I liked.

I wished and wished for it. To grow up faster. Just to have a spray.

## Between you and me

*Ellie Patterson*

I rack my brain  
for any sort of words  
worthy of the sun.

It tumbles through the glass  
and the others brighten up.  
Thoughts light up in their heads.

The sun, they'd say,  
starts every brand new day  
and all events that follow.

But though they happen to be honest,  
I'd rather write tomorrow.  
Today, I'd love to stay in bed.

## Patterns

*Ellie Patterson*

'Dad, have you heard of a place called Greece?' the young girl asks. He chuckles. Of course he has. Memories of those summers rush into his head. If only he could reach out and touch them again. 'I'm going to go there one day,' the young girl continues. Of course she will. His eyes prick. She'll make her own memories under the stunning sun. Maybe she'll meet someone special there, as he did. After all, she is her father's daughter.

## *Nothing new under the sun*

*Ellie Patterson*

The sun beams down onto the glistening sand. The beach is all colour: towels and umbrellas and swimsuits. The holiday goers are anxious to relax, but the sand burns. The manager rushes to a young vegan couple complaining about the nearby sizzle of rashers, sausages, burgers. A fire is not allowed, but some are cooking anyway. A beach holiday, heaven for some, torture for others.

## *I apologise*

*Ellie Patterson*

I'll look into the starry sky  
that glimmers on my eye  
and say that I am sorry,  
that the time has come  
for us to say goodbye.  
Sorry that I'm sobbing,  
always go that bit too far.  
We say we're sorry and embrace,  
and I apologise  
for sitting on the bonnet,  
and spitting on the wheel.  
At least it wasn't in your face.

## Welcome

*Ellie Patterson*

The gleaming lavender leaves crack  
under tree pressure.  
Sharp maroon pebbles  
comfort the pavement.  
Puzzling tulips are accompanied  
by roses with dripping, wrecked thorns.  
The romantic gates open their hearts  
to newcomers, who wonder  
as orange robins chirp.

## You'll never be happy trying to please everyone

*Ellie Patterson*

I learned that long ago  
when I left home and never looked back at all.

The cousins whispered insults and degrading jokes  
but all that did was make me ready to be set free.

Now I love my family  
as hard as they seem to believe.



# Singing in the car, getting lost

*Ellie Patterson*

*after Taylor Swift*

*Time won't fly; it's like I'm paralysed,*  
the girls sing along to the radio.  
Rain pelts down on the windscreen.  
Headlights shine, lighting the way.

The girls sing along to the radio.  
Her friends say they've never felt so free.  
Headlights shine, lighting the way.  
God, she'll never forget this day.

Her friends say they've never felt so free.  
singing in the car with her.  
God, she'll never forget this day:  
the one that gets lost along the way.

Until they are in the car with her:  
filled with brightness and joy,  
the one that will get lost along the way.  
Lyrics playing low on the radio,

filled with brightness and joy.  
And then rain pelts down on the windscreen,  
while lyrics play low on the radio:  
*Time won't fly; it's like I'm paralysed.*

## On the brink of summer

*Ellie Patterson*

We know it's our last night together;  
we'll be going home tomorrow.  
A sense of dread,  
the thought of not seeing each other,  
long months without talking,

so we grab this moment,  
into the garden, into the heat  
and this is what we'll remember  
when we drive away from this house  
tomorrow.

## Road trip

*Ellie Patterson*

A ghost town, old and abandoned. We stumble into a forgotten bar where the old lunch menu hangs on a hook in hope. Water drips onto the wooden floor. A gem of rust. Hidden from the world, its charm washes over us, our eye scanning every detail. If only...

## The music in the background

*Khawar Bilal*

As I overhear their conversation,  
the music slowly starts to fade.  
Their voices become louder.  
Now I can hear them clearly.

The bus takes a sudden turn.  
Everything stops.  
Their conversation stops.  
The music plays on.

Only this time,  
not just in the background.

## Breakfast with hope and water

*Khawar Bilal*

Every day, when I'm eating oats at the breakfast table, I think of the refugees who have nothing to eat, no water to drink. Even if we live in a country far from the genocide and the fighting, it still affects us, in a way. By lunch, we hear more news about people dying. By dinner, we've forgotten, as if they were ghosts, or something mythical. We carry on with our existence, and if we do remember for a moment, it's just a small bit of hope that soon it'll all stop and maybe there'll be a chance of peace. A chance for the next generation. Like us.

## Hope is the thing

*Khawar Bilal*

*Hope is the thing with feathers, that perches on the soul.*

– Emily Dickinson

One wrong turn in life  
can lead to a miserable future.  
Unless you get back on your feet  
after that fall into that deep dark hole.

Sitting by the lake, watching the sunset,  
I think about hope.  
No matter how hard things get,  
hope must stay alive.

Life without hope? What would it be?

## Unusual light

*Khawar Bilal*

The parallel brown cliffs  
splitting the windy, clear ocean

An illuminated small butterfly  
finding its way through an unsettling forest.

## A very-much-needed break

*Khawar Bilal*

I'm too tired to get out of bed. Need a break  
from getting up early every morning, as the moon breaks  
from the dark sky, because it got tired too. The sun also needs a break  
from all that rising each morning, as it breaks  
for the high sky. And just like the sun and the moon, we need to break  
out of our own daily routines, break  
into something more lively instead. Wouldn't that be a break!

## Under the same roof nearly all our lives

*Khawar Bilal*

I still remember the day you came into our lives.  
I always wanted a sister. You were my wish come true.  
Then, I couldn't wait for you to get older, so I could play with you.

By the time you were older, I had grown up.  
You grew into a beautiful girl, with brown curly hair.  
And you became stubborn. Just like me.

Now, my wish is for time to go back, for us to be young again,  
so we could make better memories, spend more time together.  
Because those days will never come back.

# The Book of Memories

*Khawar Bilal*

Opening the Book of Memories

I flicker through the pages  
and see the bond we had.

Thinking about when we were young,  
how we used to spend time together,  
I open the Book of Memories.

When your first-love heart was crushed,  
I hugged you long and hard. Yes,  
I see the bond we had.

The way I used to dress you up and do your hair  
into two ponytails like small fountains –  
it's in the Book of Memories.

The years have passed and we've grown up,  
no longer quite as close,  
but still, I see the bond we had.

Thinking of the days when we were younger,  
and wishing to go back,  
I open the Book of Memories  
and see the bond we had.

## Trying to explain my temper for the first time

*Khawar Bilal*

Like the kettle whistling on top of the stove.

Like raindrops building, falling hard to the ground, ahead of a big storm.

Like scattered shells and stones on the beach.

Like a big wave arriving before a tsunami.

Like a broken, beaded necklace, pearls scattered around the floor.

Like a long flame coming unexpectedly out of a lighter.

Like lava flowing out of a crater, spilling down into the valley below,  
burning everything in its path.

## Advice from a dad

*Khawar Bilal*

In this life, we come across many people  
good and bad.

You have to be careful

about who you trust, my child.

People could take advantage  
of you and hurt you.

But you have to stand up  
for yourself.

And don't waste your time  
on foolish people who don't deserve you.

Take care of yourself.

## The locket

*Khawar Bilal*

I step into the kitchen and open the cabinet for ingredients.

There it is, in the corner of the bottom shelf, on the left: the locket

my mother gave me the first time I cooked a meal – all by myself.

Our whole life, she made us delicious food, and we were never left hungry.

Now every time I start cooking, the locket reminds me  
of the first day I started, the day she was so proud of me.

## Nature's gone mad

*Leona Waugh*

The cirrus clouds cheer at the chaos  
but the gorge revenges diabolical rain  
and eviscerates the overbearing sky.

Enter a salty pharaoh ant  
who fights a stupid grey snake  
while a woodpecker cries: 'look'!

Four agoraphobic aphids rupture the ravine,  
shooting sharp boulders around the battleground,  
as dolphins break into certain houses.

They've shattered their chains of reason.



## What I didn't know

*Leona Waugh*

was how swiftly childhood passes.  
I comb through college courses,  
searching for the one  
that will define my future.  
My eyes, assaulted by the choices.  
Just yesterday, my fingertips barely reached  
the kitchen shelves  
and I couldn't tie my laces.  
So how, pray tell,  
am I supposed to leave this place?  
Perhaps it's a positive thing,  
having so many doors wide open.  
To be able to walk any road.  
I could be anything I wanted.  
Doctor, writer, bricklayer.  
What I don't yet know,  
is how to embrace this freedom.

## Communication

*Leona Waugh*

They've barricaded the doors, we can't break  
through! Well, that's bad, hopefully communications don't break  
down. It's not looking good. We may have to do something drastic. Break  
in, you mean? Maybe. Break  
open the crate of ammunition. Unless you'd rather their kids break  
down.

## The Lake

*Leona Waugh*

We stopped at the lakeside  
to have our lunch.  
I still feel the oats stuck  
between my teeth.

We waded into the depths  
where ghostly kelp brushed our legs.  
I still feel the cold  
numbing up my spine.

We shivered and cringed,  
having to drive home.  
I remember how the engine  
rumbled and roared.

We both fell ill,  
our bodies grew weak.  
I'd hoped we'd get better.  
Only one of us did.

## Haiku

*Leona Waugh*

There's nothing to do.  
The harsh rain holds me captive.  
I long for snowfall.

## The place where the world ends

*Leona Waugh*

I've discovered the place where the world ends.  
Somewhere outside North, South, East or West.  
You can stand on its edge, feel the wind stop.  
And beyond it – there's nothing.

The silence is deafening.  
The darkness is blinding.  
The cold burns my skin.

You will not understand.  
Neither did I.

I've discovered the place where the world ends.  
And beyond it – there's nothing.

## Sister

*Leona Waugh*

At first there was one  
but now there are two.  
Beneath one roof,  
we're different, me and you.

While my pencils scratch at paper,  
your outline your eyes.  
My brushes are dipped in paint  
and yours in powder.

We took our eyes from different dna  
mine from father, yours from mother.  
My eyes are like wood;  
yours are like water.

## Hunter

*Leona Waugh*

You leap the gate  
a mouse in your jaws  
you drop it at the door,  
then wash your paws.

I cannot be angry.  
I know what you are.  
So come home to me.  
Don't wander too far.

I'll dry off your fur.  
I'll give you your food.  
And I'll still offer you love  
despite my own mood.

It's late in the evening.  
I'll put you to bed  
So hop on the couch  
and rest your fluffy head.

## Waiting for the cat

*Leona Waugh*

You've taken three hours to come home.  
I've been left to fidget and fret  
and really, I'd rather be in bed.

The sun has long since left.  
The garden lights are turned on.  
You've taken three hours to come home.

My eyelids are drooping  
like stones in a pond.  
and really I'd rather be in bed.

But I'd prefer stay awake  
than be woken to unlock the door.  
You've taken three hours to come home.

I'm more concerned than I'm mad  
and exhausted too.  
You've taken three hours to come home,  
and I'd really rather be in bed.

## The world stills, everything seems to have frozen

*Niamh Walsb*

I think back to the life I knew – before this shocking news.  
Words that can make those big things now seem so small.

The way I would notice everything around me  
and store it deep in my head, for reasons I can't explain.

Everything comes flooding back, as if it were a sea.  
The icky smells of my grandad's cigarettes,

the loud bang of my dad's shoes. It makes me sad  
how even the slightest disaster drove me mad.

I see my life before me in a new way.  
Yet still I am frozen, with nothing to say.

## Around the garden

*Niamh Walsb*

floats the crispy gnome.  
Deafening, squeaking,  
are the disco-ball tulips  
and birds feasting on crumbs.  
And yet, what happiness!

## I listen to music as if it was a religion

*Niamh Walsh*

All day every day, I surround myself with sound.  
It makes the outside world a little less loud.

It makes the blinding lights a little less bright.  
It makes short work of those long long nights.

I can become myself again, who I want to be.  
I feel cured from the world's distracting sensories.

The temperature drops, voices become dull.  
The world empties my brain that once was full.

But then the song ends, the outside has returned.  
Time to wake back up, ember to flame, and burn.

## What I didn't know

*Niamh Walsh*

was that, despite our difficulties and needs, the world simply does not stop. It continues to revolve. Everything might go wrong, yet the planet stops for nothing. After you, I longed for the world to stop. But the world must move on, and time passes too fast to waste it. So, despite every hardship, every struggle, every loss, I must stay afloat, hold my own, and move on.

## Haiku

*Niamh Walsh*

A dark, starry sky  
leaves a cold street in silence  
and the world sits still.

## I am sorry

*Niamh Walsh*

I am sorry for not realising  
what I once failed to see.  
I am hoping you will accept this  
most sincere apology.  
I am sorry I failed to know  
to keep my mouth shut around you.  
I am sorry my way of speaking  
is not to your liking.  
I'm sorry my likes bother you so much.  
I am sorry you think I'll spread something  
through touch.  
But most of all, to show I care, really,  
I am sorry you are too up yourself  
to think you deserve this apology.



## Scattered

*Niamh Walsh*

I wake up, my teddies scattered on the floor. My headphones tangled beyond repair. My room in total darkness. No, I don't want to get up. I would like to stay here forever. I don't like school. I hate the loudness. I hate the sadness. I hate being in my head. As I trudge into dressing, I dodge every teddy and remote. I take my medicine. I throw on my uniform. I throw on my shoes. I throw on my big smile. I sigh, wish the car journey could last forever. I notice every detail passing by. Kids pulling parents, parents pulling kids and parents without their kids. The gloomy street lights light up the dark roads as we wait for the sun. I get out of the car, walk into school in the frosty air with my frayed uniform. I get to class, see my friends. As the morning ends, it returns immediately. All I want to do is go home.

## Da da...

*Niamh Walsh*

In a circular,  
sour forest

a daring, salty bird  
by the growly river

whistles to a velvety deer  
under a careful sky

of indigo fog  
and kinetic rain.

## When the living is easy

*Niamb Walsh*

Save your tears for the pillow –  
It's summertime!  
And light can make a dull room glimmer.  
Let's climb a mountain for the sunrise.

It's summer time!  
The air is crisp yet warm.  
We've climbed a mountain for the sunrise,  
which blazes as we toast marshmallows.

The air is crisp yet warm.  
We've made it to freedom,  
which blazes as we toast marshmallows,  
as though summer will never end.

We've made it to freedom  
and summer is forever!  
No, it'll never end,  
or let dullness creep in.

Ah but summer's *not* forever.  
No light to make this room glimmer.  
The dullness creeps in.  
I save my tears for the pillow.

# A Criminal's Guide to a Successful Break

*Niamh Walsh*

I'm in dire need of a break.  
I've got a job that can't be done at the break  
of dawn. I long somehow to break  
through to myself. To stop. Take a break.  
I try to convince myself all is well until the break  
out occurs. Oh no. I'm break-  
ing out in a rash again, from the stress. I need a break!  
Is all of this worth it? If I make a break  
for it, I'll have to work out how to break  
out of a prison cell. Does steel even break?  
I'm so stressed. I think I'm about to break  
down. Maybe I just need to break  
out of my thoughts. Got caught when my hostage tried to break  
out of captivity – and succeeded. His break  
has caused a break  
in my criminal life. Before I plan my break  
from the entire justice system, I'll take a break,  
watch some Tv and play bingo in the ad break.  
Sometimes, even prisoners need a break.

## After The Incident

*Niamh Walsh*

I think I will go home  
for dams have to break.  
I will soon be flooded.  
Better now than later.

For dams have to break.  
I hold my breath and think  
*better now than later.*  
Hate to get all wet.

I hold my breath and think  
*I must prepare myself.*  
Hate to get all wet.  
But water always dries.

I must prepare myself!  
For time is ticking fast.  
Though water always dries  
I am filled with fear.

Time is ticking fast.  
I will soon be flooded  
and am filled with fear.  
I think I will go home.

## The race he constantly wins

*Niamh Walsh*

I've always loved a good race –  
in fact, I always aim for first place,  
not just in running or in sport  
but in every inch of life that I experience.  
I don't get why it's such an issue.

I must say, I've always loved to race,  
and every time, spend more funds on shoes,  
even though I've got, oh, hundreds of designer pairs!  
I want the latest for the experience.  
I doubt it's too much of an issue.

I love a good race,  
diminishing everyone around me,  
'cause my life is clearly worse.  
They haven't had my experiences.  
Their feelings aren't an issue.

I love this good race,  
cause I'm clearly, yet again, the winner.  
I'm a genius, after all!  
I've got tons of experiences.  
My lack of empathy is hardly an issue.

I absolutely love a good race.  
And my boy is almost winning too,  
though my girl is set on last place.  
She just needs experience.  
Well! It's not my issue.

I thought I loved a good race.  
But not when I lose.  
This race must be rigged.  
Why does no one care for my experience?  
I am having an issue.

## The music box

*Niamh Walsh*

When I was five, my mam went on holiday. She came home with a small statue of Belle that played music when you wound her up. I was infatuated with her – as though I'd just been rid of all my problems. At five, my biggest issue was that I hated jeans. Every night my mam would let Belle play music until I was sound sleep.

Since I turned fourteen, things have got tougher. My life's become a never-ending roller coaster, no longer as simple as jeans. My mam is so patient with me. Just like my music box, every day, she calms me, makes my problems go away.

## I need a new lens

*Niamh Walsh*

I don't want this any more.  
The food's gone too mushy!  
I never wished for this.

The crowd around me pushes and screams.  
My heart begins to pound.  
I don't want this anymore.

She slowly stops eating.  
She brushes off my concern.  
I never wished for this.

The things I once loved  
are dismissed and frowned upon.  
I don't want this any more.

I hate the tablets every morning,  
but I hate being sad even more.  
I never wished for this.

The lens from which I see the world is faulted,  
but I don't think it's me at fault.  
I don't want this any more.  
I never wished for this.

# Trying to explain the mess of myself

*Niamh Walsh*

Sad

like the day fading into night during a constant storm

like candle wax melting and reforming as the wick is lit and blown out

like reading aloud while everyone sniggers, and you can't tell if you're funny or freaky

like the small ugly slime left behind by a snail

like a constant grief that hangs over a cemetery

Anxious

like the whole world is watching my every move

like a tiger is about to burst out of its cage and eat me

like every step taken will only widen the cracks in the pavement

Odd

When my food is mushy, I cry like a baby who's lost his dummy.

When routines change, I explode like a balloon with too much helium.

When jokes are told, I fail to get it, like a fly trying to get out of a shut window  
when everyone judges my quirks, I feel like a confused child when Santa  
doesn't come

I can only shrug my shoulders and hide my tears, while I feel like a shoe that's  
old, tattered, unwanted, barely holding together.



# I stumbled over to the tree

*Sadhbh O'Connor*

I walk through trees, looking  
at some, stumbling over others.

I see these shadows,  
like images you would see on a deck  
of cards. Some are behind the trees,  
hiding.

Some are on the trees, climbing.

I take out the torch on my phone,  
as it is dusky.

I see a figure, I lose focus, and then  
it's gone.

It's beginning to get dark,  
with wispy winds circling the air.  
I make my way home, to be greeted  
by the sound  
of my family's laughter.

I look through the window  
and see the glasses on the table  
glistening from the Christmas lights.  
The knives and forks are diagonal on the plates.  
I missed the meal.

It doesn't bother me though. Sometimes it's better  
to do your own thing.

## Haiku

*Sadhbbh O'Connor*

The cold crisp mornings,  
leaving a chill through the air,  
freeze our finger tips.

## The music moves me like a wave

*Sadhbbh O'Connor*

I throw shoes  
into the wardrobe,  
with a bang  
I can feel  
through the speakers in my ears.  
Completely isolated  
from the rest of the house,  
I swing my arms as I throw  
unmatched socks  
into the washing machine,  
completely unaware  
of my surroundings.  
The song stops playing.  
The silence arrives.  
And I am.

## The glass half-broken

*Sadhbh O'Connor*

We sit in silence, longing for a break.  
Soon enough, it'll be summer, and we'll break  
through the sadness of this temporary break.  
Thankfully, she'll get a chance to break  
away, but it's caused a break-  
down. I know that I will break  
into the house again to check they didn't break  
up on the day I caused the window to break.  
I tell her I'm sorry and she breaks  
into tears. We could all use a break.

## If only

*Sadhbh O'Connor*

A few bright crisp days,  
chatter leaving more to the skies.  
Chapped hands from the cold  
and sore mouths from the talking.

A quiet song, playing white.  
The door closes. Beyond it is nothing.  
So strong, so weak, we sit in rows,  
as if at a movie. If only.

## She sat at the table calmly

*Sadhbh O'Connor*

She was optimistic, but lazy.  
Still, she sieved the dry  
and cracking snow,  
noticing that the sky was filled  
with fragile clouds  
and the wind was whispering  
ghostly rumours about queenly cars.  
She looked out the window  
and saw the cunning lake  
being battered about like a tsunami.  
Along the avenue, furious billboards  
were bearing down on stalking shrimps.  
Miracle pine trees were kicking  
and ripping, shaking Canada.  
She saw a panda superstitiously  
eating a daisy. Well, nothing for it,  
but to carve the golden branch.

## The music in the background moves like a tree

*Saoirse Barry*

A wind guitar strums while I walk free.  
One path swirls out and I follow – I want to see  
my thoughts disappear like a bird flying up into the trees.  
The wind sings a song, and I sing along.

## The waves

*Saoirse Barry*

The waves pulled the sand into the water.  
I was standing on the shore,  
wondering whether I would let them  
pull me in too.

Eventually, I waded in.

The wind sliced my face.  
Foam covered me.  
I truly knew I was there. Only there  
was I me.

Beyond the shoreline,  
the landscape was filled with trees.  
I didn't know if I could leave  
after all.

## Lost in land

*Saoirse Barry*

The gullible frog strutted through gleeful grass as he squashed the hostile, historical cars in his path. He arrived at his superstitious, hydrated house and sat at the curiously panicked table. He used his sombre pencil and aggressive paper to figure out how to find his kaleidoscopic, ludicrous bracelet, in a land covered with ambidextrous, elegant waterfalls.

# The light that dims

*Saoirse Barry*

My light was dim and yours was bright  
We never switched sides. You held me tight  
Your light scraped my insides clean  
I wanted to feel everything

We never switched sides, you held me tight  
I lit with you, we were a match  
I wanted to feel everything  
Your light started to dim. I didn't look back

I lit with you, we were a match.  
Rain fell at night, there was no light.  
Yours started to dim. I never looked back  
to your former bright light, when you still held me tight.

Rain fell at night; there was no light.  
The sun came up, but you weren't there.  
I couldn't handle your bright light; you still held me tight.  
I sat still, dimmer than ever. Now wish you were here.

The sun came up but you weren't there.  
Your light scraped my insides clean.  
I sit still, dimmer than ever. Wish you were here.  
My light was dim, but yours was forever.

## The break of dawn

*Saoirse Barry*

Today I woke at the break  
of dawn. I lay still, not wanting to break  
the silence. The birds chirped musically and I slowly remembered the night  
before.

The start of summer break. I wanted to break out of my shell. Break  
free of the mindset of caring what others thought. To break  
away from overthinking every move I made.  
It was exhausting! I needed a break.

## Rain fell

*Saoirse Barry*

The thought of it was baffling.  
It ran through our minds.  
It seemed so otherworldly,  
fast-moving and sharp.  
Beyond the horizon.  
And then it stopped.  
Without. Warning.

## In the car

*Saoirse Barry*

She picks me up from my dad's in her car.

We say hello in the car.

I see her most often in the car.

We share news in the car.

She works at a car rental company.

The car is a capsule, a room,

a spaceship, a vacuum.

She's always driving or parking.

We fight in the car, staring ahead.

I watch her hands tap on the steering wheel.

We say goodbye in the car.

## How to explain

*Saoirse Barry*

Like a slightly acidic substance that slowly eats away at anything it touches.

Like a puppy constantly scratching at the door to get in, even though it's not supposed to.

Like a rain cloud coming in on a sunny day, when it wasn't forecast.

Like a heavy metal bottle crashing to the floor in a quiet classroom.

Like eating food from the pantry and finding that it was meant for dinner.



## I always wondered

*Sarah Whooley*

Was it a big yellow button  
with holes that shone out a bright light  
for a scared child  
trying to escape the night?

It towers over everything  
that we do,  
till clouds cover it,  
so the sun can't see through.

It has travelled the world  
reaching every country,  
covering every one of them  
in hope and joy.

## I remember – why don't you?

*Sarah Whooley*

I remember your first steps,  
treading along the floor.  
The laugh that filled the air  
when you were only four.  
The day you took that big  
step and started primary school.  
But I can't remember the day  
you forgot that I am cool.

## A roomful of joy

*Sarah Whooley*

The room overflows with cake.  
You look for someone you know  
There are many gifts on the table.  
Sunlight beams through the window.

You look for someone you know.  
Your friend sees you. As if by magic,  
sunlight beams through a window.  
People dance to loud music.

Your friend sees you as if by magic.  
The present you brought is small.  
People dance to loud music.  
She's excited and hugs you.

The present you brought is small.  
Your friend doesn't mind at all.  
She's excited and hugs you.  
The room is happy and light.

Your friend doesn't mind at all.  
There are many gifts on the table  
The room is happy and light,  
and overflowing with cake.

## What I didn't know before

*Sarah Whooley*

is how films are made.

Actors are hired to make a story  
come to life.

People who are strangers  
act as a family.

That's how we started –  
as strangers.

We brushed up against each other,  
as we were leaving a cafe.

Snow was falling  
and you were holding a book.

Now you are closer to me than family,  
and I don't need to act  
any more.

## St. Angela's College

Poetry by

**AnnaBelle O'Sullivan**

**Millie Noonan**

**Emma Groß**

**Ciara O'Connor**

**Darcy O'Riordan**

**Tara Daly**

**Katie Kent**

**Sophie O'Donoghue**

**Ciara Butler**

**Issy Coughlan**

**Clíona Brennan**

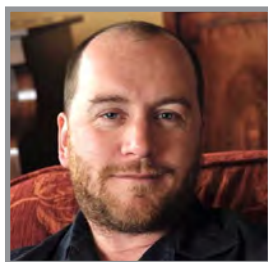
**Jessica Byrne**

Assisting Writer: David McLoughlin

T.Y. Coordinator: Holly Peters

Workshops held at Cork City Library

Assisting Librarian: Declan Barron



Working with the students of St. Angela's was a joy, in part because it reminded me of my beginnings as a 16-year-old poet, but mainly because they were so inventive, producing surprising and at times subversive work. We met between 10 and 11:30 am, usually twice a month at Grand Parade library between November and February, through rain, wind and some sun, and over that time a good workshop *esprit de corps* developed. Looking at the students' work reminds me of the prompts we worked on, and sometimes what the weather was like that day.

*Noticing*, or paying attention, to our walk to the library from St. Patrick's Hill was one prompt; another was the Exquisite Corpse, a collective warm-up poem that led to much laughter. We worked on imagery and metaphor throughout, as well as haiku, five-word challenges, ekphrastic responses to paintings,

persona poetry, instructional poems, and origin poems ('Where I'm From' by Willie Perdomo was a favourite).

The students were enthusiastic and creative, good listeners, but also prone to chat. I tried to keep the balance between attention and fun, and took the attitude that as long as it wasn't interrupting the writing, then it was fine. The persona assignment led in unusual directions, in that some decided to write as other members of the class, or take on imagined personalities. One student wrote as me, in my alternative persona as an investment banker named *Richard*. Some were voluble and funny, others quiet.

All produced valuable, surprising work that reminds me of the importance of creative writing in developing our voices as individuals, particularly as teenagers. We can't work out what we are thinking until we say it, in speech or in writing. Doing it in community is particularly important in that it removes the isolation writers complain about, supports the creative process, and reminds us that writing is *fun*.

**David McLoghlin**



# Poems

St. Angela's College



## Haiku

*AnnaBelle O'Sullivan*

The stark, stern air  
Greeted me at the front porch,  
Wind soon approaching.

Drops of liquid  
Fell eagerly from the sky,  
Flooding each daisy with hope.

The water crashed against the banks,  
Brawny and eager, proving  
Just how impressive, how powerful it could be.  
Now, all those who once loved it, feared it.

The cold air pressed against my skin,  
The soft sounds spluttered in my ear.  
I feel at peace once again.

Listening for the song of the birds,  
Greeting the breeze as it approaches me  
Finally I am able to feel peace amidst the chaos.



# The Symbol of the Spider

*AnnaBelle O'Sullivan*

Naïve, exploring his power and passions,  
He builds a home for his family.  
A home for them to live and eat in.  
Finally, he feels pride of some sort,  
Until the sight of his works  
Leaves others with fear.  
The sight of him  
Provoking feelings of agony for those around him.  
He comes closer to others,  
For he wants to prove his simplicity and kindness,  
But those who do not stand stoically, scream.  
They call for help,  
Eager to run far from him,  
And the pride he once felt, soon disappears,  
The guilt returning.  
He tries to do right  
But only does wrong,  
Where does he belong?  
Because, his home is now destroyed  
Those who feared him, removing his works.  
He believes nobody wants him here,  
The thought of him unalive brings widespread joy.  
Yet what these fools don't realise  
Is without this creature,  
The balance of nature would  
Forever be destroyed.

## Where I'm From

*AnnaBelle O'Sullivan*

I'm from the oak trees that margin the bank of the River Lee.  
Where I'm from, the natural world presents its beauty and simplicity  
in all forms, but society casts a dark shadow above it,  
So the striking images of nature  
Become a tiny speck within our lives.  
Where I'm from, the sea breeze washes up with the river water,  
As people walk over bridge after bridge,  
A hustle to get somewhere important,  
To become that someone, that something.  
Where I'm from, you wave at Sam Brien,  
Not knowing if the wave will reflect or simply be absorbed by the eye,  
But you will always wave, because it is a moral sin not to do so.  
Where I'm from, gazing at the night stars,  
Will leave a hole in your heart,  
For the brutality of life to flood you,  
Because, where I'm from, the stars cannot be seen,  
despite the rest of the universe remaining dark for them to shine.  
So, where I'm from, you must instead look to the daisies  
and dandelions that stand alone,  
but not lonely, beneath the birds who chirp  
Moving with the wind.  
And it is here, you must find your purpose, pleasure and peace,  
Because, where I'm from,  
Although your purpose is present,  
Sometimes it's hidden,  
Just like the stars in the night sky,  
Perhaps not seen by the eye,  
Yet without, our universe would simply be incomplete.  
So, where I'm from, you must not only think outside the box,

But completely abandon any box, in which society has you placed.  
You must consider your presence, care to find your purpose  
and commit to maintaining your peace.

## Trapped by the Mind

*AnnaBelle O'Sullivan*

Each day, waking up he felt dread  
It was a hopeless feeling for the day ahead.  
A lingering feeling he was doing wrong,  
A sense of guilt so striking and strong.

Little brought him happiness,  
But the things that did  
Were no longer within reach,  
As though in a jar with a closed lid.

The sunlight reflects strongly,  
Showering beams throughout his room.  
Despite the impressive, charming light,  
His mind was never not flooded with doom.

# The Flaws of Society

*AnnaBelle O'Sullivan*

The Ash tree standing stoically along the banks of the Lee,  
Alone, yet not lonely,  
For the river washes against  
Its bark sometimes,  
Greeting it like an old friend.  
As the river breeze approaches the ash,  
It's reminded of the agonies leaving,  
And the charming, striking sunlight floods the tree with hope.  
When it rains, liquid pouring  
Eagerly from the sky,  
The Ash can be reminded of its growth.  
And as humans act in foolish ways  
The Ash can rejoice, in the energy it's provided with,  
To keep its chin up high.  
When the river sits still, distant from the Ash,  
Or sometimes flooding its roots—  
The Ash can find peace even in the chaos.  
Yet I can only find chaos, in a world of peace.

# Forgive Me

*AnnaBelle O'Sullivan*

For falling in love with the ordinary,  
And carving out my own path,  
Instead of simply walking one  
That was set out for others.

Forgive me  
For not meeting the expectations  
That society has put on youth,  
For finding joy within a simple ray of sunshine,  
Or perhaps from the wonderful taste of fruit.

Forgive me  
For not striving for the extraordinary,  
Rather, living life in a simple way.  
Because perhaps I don't find it so bad after all,  
I really am sorry though, I have to say.

## Magic

*AnnaBelle O'Sullivan*

Standing alone  
In the midst of Antarctica,  
I rock from side to side.  
Soaking in the sea of beauty.  
It's quite intriguing, yet also simple.  
Like tasting the rich flavour of chocolate  
While sniffing the petals of a lily flower,  
Perhaps it's the first time  
Since the Santa Stories of my youth  
That I believe in magic.

# The Searchers

*AnnaBelle O'Sullivan*

Perhaps considered demons,  
Devils of the mind,  
The searchers are merely innocent children,  
With great hopes to find  
A purpose or reason  
For us humans to live,  
So these naive beings,  
Are ones we must forgive.

It is society that gives  
Such searchers an aim  
To strive constantly for success,  
For money, for fame.  
The flaw, however,  
That lies within such a kind,  
Is that it's only imbalance and adversity  
That the mind will find.

You see, the victory of the mind  
Is deeply profound,  
For it lies within the surrender of the searchers,  
In which pleasure and peace are found.

So it is ordinary life,  
In which simplicity lives,  
Falling in love with such an essence,  
Will give each person their purpose,  
Pleasure, their peace—  
All of life's gifts.

## City Fever

*Millie Noonan*

I noticed the sharp cold creeping up my skin.

I noticed the bitter wind collecting my hair  
strand by strand,

I noticed the salt crunching beneath my feet  
preventing a fatal fall.

I noticed the cheer and laughter circling  
music from shops.

I noticed the bags brushing off each other  
filled with things  
memories will be built off.

## Haiku

*Millie Noonan*

The river flows west.

Sitting on the crooked ground,

My thoughts run with it.

Hand in hand we go,

Up to the tippy top we glide,

where we are free to run wild.

## Forget Me Not

*Millie Noonan*

I noticed the beating engine, pushing me up and down  
pounding like a fright.  
The lights juggle and flickered slowly prancing around my head.  
Passengers chatting, laughing...  
how I missed the chatter.  
Headlights to my left, the light mist swirls with the breeze.  
Latching to the window the droplet glides down the glass  
with my reflection in between.  
She stares back at me with tears walking down her face,  
not letting me forget a memory I cannot erase.

## Untitled

*Millie Noonan*

Here I stand in my wood,  
Looking over all those who are good.  
High above me a bird sings to her babies,  
while Ms. Rabbit goes back to the burrow for tea.  
Standing tall, my leaves shake and my bark aches.  
A sharp sting hooks my back, as if I have entered  
a painful mouse trap.  
The families I nurtured and praised fell down  
with the rain as I leaned forward to be put away.



## Two Roads

*Millie Noonan*

My three girls.

Three sweet girls relaxing on the bench.

I picture the life they will grow up to have at my old age.

Will they marry? Will they sway?

I wonder if they'll become like me, a joint smoker,

a bit of wasted creation.

I wish my girls their fairy-tale life on the right side of the tracks.

The coughing, the wheezing, the late drinks out

and fallen youth.

A doctor I could have been and all I want is the best for you.

## Untitled

*Millie Noonan*

I gazed at myself in the mirror,

A doppelganger hung by a thread

like a fly trapped in goo.

Myself surrounded by my gold riches

and the fruit that feeds me.

Although I must go out and play now

until the reaper says goodbye,

farewell my sorrowful friend.

# Penny Method

*Millie Noonan*

Bing, Bing, bing.

My screen lights up as soon as it closes.

It's him. He's kind, funny even.

Replay, save. Replay, save.

This has never happened before.

"Hey pretty."

"Hey handsome," I reply,

my heart thumping with excitement,

running laps around my body like its own personal track.

Kicking my legs, a smile reaching my temples

to only face truth the next day...

Delivered 7 hrs

Delivered 10

Delivered 22

"Sorry I'm just really tired lately I was busy"

"Don't worry, it's good."

Compliment after compliment.

I know his coffee order, the bands, the interests.

He's never asked a question about me.

Giving him attention, while he lives life,

giving him my pennies and my time

For an ending where I become loveless

and empty with no one by my side

## My Lonely Poetic Heart

*Millie Noonan*

As I watch you leave the rusty gates,  
as I stand by the tree and watch you race.  
The ring I possess wrapped around me like a pretty ribbon,  
that is a mere ghost I trace in emerald ink  
as its signature stain varnished my skin.  
In the kitchen we danced as you held me and sang  
to where I could get lost in your melody.  
I watch you play in the grass as I lay in its daisy filled bed.  
“He shoots... he scores!” They cheer, I grin.  
You touch my skin, from there I meet your watercolour eyes.  
Eyes that can never make up their mind.  
Shifting between the sea and the shore to the mainland vegetation.  
Your hair runs with the wind pushing the waves to the limits.  
It runs like you, freely.

## Dawn of Night

*Emma Groß*

The moon shines like a silver coin  
Shadows paint the dawning night  
Moths fly down like fallen souls  
My vision is clear but my heart is dull

## Where I'm From

*Emma Groß*

I'm from beautiful colourful scenery in the hills of the earth  
Where I'm from, cherry blossoms and tulips announce the spring  
Where I'm from the stars steal your breath and the sun steals your life

## Ladybugs

*Emma Groß*

Red wings with black dots,  
Moving quickly,  
Resting rarely.  
Their touch soft and light,  
Flattering the receiver,  
Brightening your day,  
Changing your life.  
Black head and legs,  
Moving quickly,  
Resting rarely.  
Light in darkness  
And the dark in light.  
Small body, big heart,  
Moving quickly,  
Resting rarely.  
Craving the end,  
Fearing the limit.  
Like us.

## So Much, Too Much

*Emma Groß*

Learning so much,  
Remembering so little.  
Doing so much,  
It's working so little.  
Having so much,  
Accepting so little.  
Wanting so much,  
It's getting too much.

## Untitled

*Emma Groß*

When you broke my heart  
You shattered my soul  
You left me to die on the side of the road  
Somebody saved me  
I don't remember who  
But I still remember the day  
The last of a long cold May

\*

But I still remember the day  
The last of a long cold May  
When you shattered my soul  
You left me to die on the side of the road

## Untitled

*Emma Groß*

Choose a happy life,  
Live merry days,  
Enjoy every moment.  
You only get one chance  
Use it to the fullest,  
Until the brim overflows,  
Until the day you'll leave this earth behind.

## Good Morning

*Emma Groß*

When I stepped out the door,  
The crisp morning air hit me like a fresh breeze  
I admired the deep blue sky and the big clean moon  
On my way to school, the fallen leaves brought colour to my vision  
In the city, people running their errands, going to work  
students rushing to class  
The actions are fast but seem so slow

# Haiku

*Emma Groß*

Sun teasing me,  
longing to be outside longer.  
The bell rings.

Out the window  
into the landscapes,  
calling my name.

I glance around,  
Finished already,  
Putting the pen to the side.

The trees surround me,  
calling my name.  
A bird answers.

Fruit juice running  
Down the side of my mouth,  
I swallow.

I wave goodbye to  
The love of my life.  
No, it's a beginning

## Heimat

*Emma Groß*

I see the distant castle shining in the afternoon  
Down the hill, a church catches my eye  
Surrounded by green trees and red roofs  
The roaring of cars interrupts my silence,  
Splits my world in two.  
Flowers calming, voices raising

## Waves

*Emma Groß*

Strong waves of realisation wash over me,  
I don't get what they're trying to say.  
My entire merciful life  
All hope was lost,  
Was crushed in the blink of an eye.  
Is this the moment I have been waiting for?  
Is this the end of the world?  
I understand what I must do – it hits me.



## Tomorrow

*Emma Groß*

Yesterday I saw fog,  
Today I see nothing.  
My mind and vision blurred.  
The weather represents my mood,  
The clouds hanging low,  
Yearning to get the weight off their shoulders.  
Water will start flowing soon,  
In nature, and my face.

## Longing

*Emma Groß*

And one thing I'm looking forward to today,  
Is cake.  
And one place I'm looking forward to,  
Is my bed.  
And one state of mind I'm looking forward to,  
Is peace.  
All the damn time.

## Abandonment Issues

Emma Groß

(Persona: Phoebe)

Have I told you about the time I was abandoned in Antarctica?  
My parents, researchers on the path to success.

When I was born,  
I was their bright shining hope in the desert of ice.

A prophecy for their triumph,  
Until one day not only the ice was cold.

*“The meaning of life is that it stops” ~Franz Kafka*

I didn't understand that as a child, I'm not sure I even do now  
My parents went so suddenly,

Never giving me the opportunity to register  
My newfound loneliness and the gap in my heart.

*“For what is it to die but to stand naked in the wind  
and to melt into the sun?” ~ Kahlil Gibran*

But I wasn't the sun, I was the moon

## Once Upon a Time

*Emma Groß*

Memories felt like weapons  
Used by my family to bring me to my knees.  
At nineteen, God will rest my soul.  
I am remorseless,  
I hope my bloodline will realise  
And their heads will bow.

## Beginning

*Ciara O'Connor*

An old hardback, tattered, and uncared for,  
An ancient story, never shared  
Taking the book gingerly from the stack,  
I opened it, taken aback,  
The pages were glued with dust,  
But I owed it to the author so I read it, I had to.  
An untold story, and now it was mine  
To last, and last, until the end of time.

## Water

*Ciara O'Connor*

The bustling river ran along the rocks, talking to the busy bank.  
It carried secrets in its arms from the places it had ventured.  
The river loved to travel,  
across the verdant countryside, through the grey city.  
It burbled and grumbled  
growing tired of its journey.  
Day and night it ran,  
though acres and towns towards its coast it meandered.  
Where finally, one day,  
it hoped to reunite with its one true love.

## Haiku

*Ciara O'Connor*

Frosty morning breeze  
Engulfing my frame, as I  
pad along, softly, slowly

The beating sunshine  
beaming down in summertime,  
I now feel it still

A single lone fox,  
Plodding along on moist grass,  
paws silent and light.

The rustle of leaves,  
As the wind howls all around,  
Making me shiver.

The clicking of pens,  
rustling of paper, as we  
scribble, collecting thoughts.

A chorus of song  
Flying above, wings flapping,  
High in clear blue skies.

Feet crunch on gravel,  
plodding to school once again,  
a day on repeat.

# Where I'm From

*Ciara O'Connor*

Where I'm from, the rain pours heavy and the sun shines brightly.

Where I'm from, my sister dances and my friends chatter.

Where I'm from, robins nestle together for warmth on trees in winter,  
while sparrows bathe in the calm clear waters of the pool to cool down in  
summer.

Where I'm from, playful dogs bound in the verdant, dew-dropped foliage  
of the park, and hissing cats - thirsty angry cats - search for a drink  
in the shade of cobble-stoned alleyways.

Where I'm from, neighbours bustle to and from their cars in the early hours  
of the morning but they also stay in bed - rising as slowly as the sun.

The French lady always seems to be awake, however.

Where I'm from, dandelions spurt wildly from the fertile earth,  
and tropical, colourful flowers bloom in palm trees.

Where I'm from, I'm from the cloaks of Gandhi, always peaceful, calm and  
tranquil.

Where I'm from, whether it is warm or cold, bustling or silent, I belong.

# Noticing

*Ciara O'Connor*

The winter creeps up slowly,  
Menacing and cold.

Until walking,  
your fingers become little ice cubes,  
unable to move, so still,  
so freezing,  
you pump your arms, layered in coats  
—you walk quickly

The warmth of your carbon dioxide  
clashing against the crisp, howling wind.  
Feet shuffling, careful not to fall  
on the slippery ice,  
the wind howling around you  
as you scurry along.

Desperate to escape  
this blanket of frost,  
breath leaving clouds behind you.

# Noticing

*Ciara O'Connor*

Horns blaring, engines running,  
a cloud of smoke from exhausts around.  
People bustle in the streets,  
heads down, gazing absent-minded,  
traffic congests roads as  
people rush along, busy, busy,  
Coffee cups in hands, running late,  
moving much quicker than the rising sun.  
Damp concrete towns  
The bustle of city life,

I can still hear the birds, chirping,  
and the tranquillity of the countryside,  
Echoing—a mirage.

I saw the holiday season,  
looming before me,  
warm and comforting,  
—just out of reach.  
As I heaved my bag onto my back,  
trundling down the hill,  
my warm breath condensing on cold, dry air,  
to school I walked—once again.  
Deadlines lingered like the frost on the roads,  
However, above all, a melody of hope  
—Christmas was coming



## Writers

*Ciara O'Connor*

The gentle rustling of paper,  
pens gliding along the smooth surface,  
the clicking of toppers and the faint echo

of books being closed.

The air hummed with thought,  
as though inspired  
by the poets at work.

## Words

*Ciara O'Connor*

A Pegasus, athletic and sleek,  
silent soaring wings of gilded gold

Flies above.

It swoops and cascades,

Gazing down at the zeitgeist

Of the 18th century,

Cobblestone streets, marks of fruit and fabrics,

Down below.

## The Hidden Zeitgeist

*Darcy O’Riordan*

I wonder if the cracking gold facade will fade,  
Because I’m tired of the zeitgeist of this age,  
If only I could grow a pair and fly,  
Away from the stifling toxic world views I live by.

I never would have opened my tight shut eyes  
And let the fruits of my labour pass me by,  
But there is no fairy godmother appearing to hear my plea,  
So like the Loch Ness, hidden and waiting I’ll keep.

## Daily Daydreams

*Darcy O’Riordan*

A mermaid I wish I could be,  
Swimming in the salty sea,  
Letting stars in the night shine down,  
And watching waves crash all around.

Would I miss seeing hotties on the bus,  
Daydreaming about the future for us,  
Crawling back to the library still,  
Reading fantasy until I get my fill.

If I was a mermaid, I’d miss my feet,  
Catwalking me speedily down the street.  
I’d still slay, but at what cost?  
Maybe in another lifetime my voice could be lost.

## Warning to a Friend

*Darcy O’Riordan*

Him vaping on our romantic breaks,  
Staring at pictures of me, while my heart aches.  
The pictures where I’m all dolled up,  
His eyes can’t seem to bloody stop.  
Clouds of watermelon sherbet in my hair,  
Walking me home, because he wouldn’t dare.  
The souring of our messages on text,  
I wonder if he’s still friends with his ex.  
Maybe next time he’ll walk me home,  
And maybe in his arms, I’ll feel less alone.

## Circus

*Tara Daly*

I wish I could join the circus.  
where freaks and weirdos do live,  
cause maybe there I’d have a purpose,  
a place to not give a shit!  
I would dance around in my pantyhose  
and no one would bat an eyelid.  
Every night I would braid the bearded lady’s bows,  
and bid hello to all the kids arriving for tonight’s show.  
As I link arms with my people, surrounded by applause,  
I realise  
*this is the place I belong.*  
this is the place  
I don’t have to follow unwritten laws

## World

*Tara Daly*

I wish I could run to the end of the world.

bring my worries my insecurities,  
and drop them off like little presents,  
on top with ribbon twirled.

I would forgive all the antagonists in my life,  
then force them to delicately remove the knife  
they placed in my back, and ask  
what was their drive.

as I finally reach the end of the world,

I wait for my applause, I have conquered the impossible.

Instead I'm left questioning probable cause.

The world is sleeping, the world is under an invisible spell.

Goodbye for now world, I'm bidding my farewell.

## The Memories That Never Fade

*Katie Kent*

Beneath the sun's warm, golden gaze,  
Childhood's summer, carefree days.  
Barefoot adventures, grassy toes,  
Chasing laughter where the wild wind blows.

Ice cream melodies, sticky sweet,  
Cotton candy clouds, a sugary treat.  
Hide-and-seek in the dappled shade,  
Innocent memories that never fade.

## Instructions on How to Smile

*Katie Kent and Millie Noonan*

Though sometimes finding a reason to smile can feel hard,  
Go out and find yourself a card,  
A little message from our retailers to you  
Should hopefully put a smile on you!

A little laugh, a little giggle, a bit of company won't be too bad  
Stay out a little longer, the night won't get too mad  
Think of all the great times you once had  
Then maybe smiling won't feel so sad.

So pick up a paintbrush, pick up a ball,  
A little peace will do good for us all!

## Instincts

*Katie Kent*

(Poem written using a line from a collaborative “Exquisite Corpse”)

It's a feeling I'm unfamiliar with,  
A feeling I had never experienced before  
The strength of this exact feeling made me feel—  
Nervous and excited all at the same time.  
Some feelings only happen once.  
And can be hard to express or explain.  
But I sure do hope I can feel like this again  
Even just once,  
Once more. That would be enough

## My Mum

*Katie Kent*

In life's grand play, a guiding star,  
A mother's love, both near and far.  
Her gentle touch, a comforting embrace,  
A haven of warmth, a tender grace.

Through storms of tears or sunshine bright,  
She stands with me, a guiding light.  
In laughter shared and lessons taught,  
Her love, a treasure, can't be bought.

A lullaby that soothes my fears,  
A well of love that lasts for years.  
In every hug, in every smile,  
A mother's presence, oh, so worthwhile.

## What I'm Used To

*Katie Kent*

By Lee's soft flow, where bridges meet,  
Cork City's heartbeat, rhythm sweet.  
Houses huddle, colours bright,  
In cobblestone streets, day turns to night.

Shandon's spire stands tall and proud,  
Bells ring out, voices echo loud.  
Through the English Market, scents entwined,  
Cork's charm, a tale, aged like wine.

Down by the quay, where seagulls soar,  
Stories echo along the river's shore.  
Fishermen mend nets, stories unfold,  
In every whisper, history's gold.

At Fitzgerald Park, where moments freeze,  
Children laugh, beneath the trees.  
Mardyke's greens, where dreams take flight,  
Cork City's embrace, a beacon of light.

## Dreams

*Katie Kent*

In meadows of gold, where sunsets sigh,  
A lone unicorn grazes, beneath the sky.  
Its mane a cascade, like amber streams,  
Chasing dreams like forgotten beams.

A doppelgänger, a mirrored sprite,  
Dances through orchards, a playful kite.  
Fruits hang low, in colours so sweet,  
A feast for senses, a joyous feat.

Wings unfold, a butterfly shy,  
Time takes flight, a whispered lullaby.  
In this enchanted realm, where wishes gleam,  
Fantasy and reality twirl, a magical dream.

# Teenagers Navigating Life in Today's World

*Katie Kent*

In a world of screens, where voices blend,  
Teenagers navigate, around the bend.  
Snapshots shared, likes and hearts,  
A digital dance, where connection starts.

School hallways echo with laughter and fears,  
Peer pressures whisper in adolescent ears.  
Identity blooms in a selfie's glow,  
In the ebb and flow of highs and lows.

Texts and emojis tell stories untold,  
In the teenage script, secrets unfold.  
Striving for dreams, finding a place,  
In today's world, a teenage embrace.

Likes and comments, a social display,  
Teenagers seek their own unique way.  
Through hashtags and trends, they find a voice,  
In a symphony of choices, each their own choice.

Amidst the chaos, friendships bloom,  
In shared memes and a crowded room.  
Yet beneath the surface, where feelings reside,  
Teenagers navigate this rollercoaster ride.



## Where I'm From

*Katie Kent*

In Cork's embrace, where the River Lee flows,  
My roots run deep, where the greenery grows.  
Cobbled streets whisper tales untold,  
A city's warmth, in its charm, I hold.

From Shandon's tower to the English Market's flair,  
Cork, my haven, beyond compare.  
Childhood echoes in each familiar sound,  
In the vibrant heart of this coastal town.

Grown-up dreams in its lively streets,  
A tapestry woven with memories sweet.  
Cork, my anchor, my timeless song,  
In its rhythm, I find where I belong.

Cork, my place, where stories align,  
In every corner, a piece of time.  
Lively pubs hum with laughter and cheer,  
A sense of home, so crystal clear.

The Lee's gentle currents, a soothing balm,  
In every echo, a comforting psalm.  
Community woven in each friendly face,  
Cork, my haven, my special space.

Where rebel spirit and kindness blend,  
In this city, my heart finds a friend.  
Through highs and lows, come what may,  
Cork, my home, where I'll always stay.

## A Day in the Life of a Building

*Katie Kent*

I tower tall, rooted in the ground,  
A silent guardian, stories abound.  
Bricks and mortar, my sturdy frame,  
In changing times, I stay the same.

Windows watch the world unfold,  
A witness to tales, both young and old.  
Through seasons' dance, I remain,  
A constant in the urban terrain.

From sunrise glow to twilight's fade,  
I've seen memories gently laid.  
A home, an office, or a store,  
I hold the echoes of life's uproar.

## Clock's Gaze: Ticking Through School Days

*Katie Kent*

On the wall, I silently tick,  
A school clock, watching each click.  
Tiny hands move, marking the pace,  
In the classroom, every student's space.

Eager eyes glance, staring my way,  
Counting minutes, through the school day.  
As lessons unfold, time slips by,  
In the hush, they hear my quiet sigh.

Tick-tock echoes in the hallowed hall,  
I witness moments, big and small.  
Young minds yearn for the break bell,  
In the classroom's dance, I have stories to tell.

## Where I'm From

*Sophie O'Donoghue*

I'm always asked where I'm from, and  
Lush green grass comes to mind.  
But fragments of waterlogged paddy fields  
Appear from what's behind.

Where I'm from, the rain falls  
From grey skies filled with clouds.  
But where I'm from is also darkened,  
From toxic air and sounds.

Where I'm from the salmon leaps,  
With freedom above four-faced towers.  
But where I'm from, the people weep  
Beneath the shadow of their leader's power.

Where I'm from people speak their mind,  
Wherever they wish to go.  
But where I'm from you must beware  
That cameras watch you for all to show.

## Haiku

*Sophie O'Donoghue*

### **Metal Crane**

Metal crane in sky  
Towering among ashen clouds  
Grey washing out green

### **A Dog's Cone**

Plastic cone circling neck  
Head laden with sad defeat  
Smack! Against a wall

## The Pianist

*Sophie O'Donoghue*

Hands which lay upon polished ivory  
The crisp white contrasting beside the stark black  
Paper resting while arms move  
An aura of peaceful harmony  
Right and left interlocking  
Entwining listeners with melody

## A Persona

*Sophie O'Donoghue*

The perfect persona is what I want  
An escape from realities  
A way to act problemless  
Ignoring what adults might see

Not to overthink, is what I want  
To look at you with ease  
To never question if I'm wrong  
If I've caused you to be disgusted by me

To talk all day is what I want  
Wishing you were here  
But fear of holding on too tight  
I falter to get near

To feel unafraid is what I want  
To not worry about wanting to leave  
My mind muddled  
My thoughts a strangled heap

To hold your hand is what I want  
Making me feel alive and free  
Messages a fraction of my intention  
Fragments are what you see

## A Picture of the Colosseum

*Sophie O'Donoghue*

Walls weathered away  
Circling the ruins within  
Sounds of clanging iron in the past  
Spilling crimson blood like sin  
Cries of fear and terror  
As they fought for freedom  
Cheering surrounding warriors  
While Charon sailed to meet them

## This Is Just To Say

*Sophie O'Donoghue*

*—for Issy*

I don't want to walk  
Beside your chaotic stride.  
You swerve along the footpath  
An uncontrollable glide.

I'm sorry for not linking arms  
But I'll be pushed from side to side.  
The cement wall a grater for my skin  
The pain which my face can't abide.

If you promise to stay  
Along a straight course due,  
I'll think about changing my mind  
I'll think about walking with you.

## Sorry

*Issy Coughlan*

*—for Sophie*

You want me to say sorry, I know I probably should.  
If I could walk in a straight line, trust me I would.  
But unfortunately I can't, if only you'd understand.  
I'm sorry to all my friends, I hope we're now good.

## Boys

*Issy Coughlan*

Boys will be boys  
Oblivious  
Young men

# Growing up

*Issy Coughlan*

The ignorance of innocence

The bliss it can be.

We longed to grow up,

Both you and me.

We longed for womanhood

To be independent and free,

Little did we know it's not all

it's cut out to be.

Little did we know our gender

would control so much,

Little did we know of the patriarchy.

Now all grown up, almost eighteen.

We begin to enter adulthood

with anything but glee.

We wish to be escape from society,

We long for girlhood

To be young and naive.



## Five Word Challenge #1

*Ciara Butler*

I sniffed along the ice, following the scent of hot chocolatey goodness.  
Santa invited me into his house in Antarctica, him and The Rock  
had got married, my heart like ice, cracked broken, my rock-chiselled features  
covered in hot chocolate, me and Ms. Claus each took an ice pick,  
The Rock and Santa: now no longer around, as no one can guess  
how on earth these two could get an ice pick through their heads.

## Poem about Nature

*Ciara Butler*

I hear beeping, grey metal monsters,  
their drivers yelling, rushing to their jobs,  
where they work 9-5 5 days a week,  
the few green trees, hiding in the mass,  
the mass of concrete stone, plastic benches  
and expensive objects called “trees”,  
I tread carefully as I walk, over the bridge,  
the wood having salt all over, like my chips for dinner,  
people smile as cameras click, posing  
in the same places where people have jumped, I love how  
we all live in oblivion, of each other’s pain, and happiness,  
because after all, who isn’t a little self-centred.

## Free Writing

*Ciara Butler*

Slow walker, feet trudging, slower and slower,  
looking at his phone, as if it would speed him up, walking  
not to the left or right, but right down the centre, as if purposefully  
badgering me, heckling me for a fight, dodging me as I attempt  
to swerve past his left and right, ice my other nemesis,  
slippery icy, hoping that I'll trip, causing me to crash and tumble,  
to the delight of passers-by, grateful that it was me not them,  
caught out by the devil known as ice, teasing me as I tiptoe  
across it, gripping onto every pole and tree,  
try not to grope people, as that would be assault.

## An Apology Poem

*Ciara Butler*

*From the Point of View of an Ice Skating Coach*

This bloody girl literally, her dramatic blood,  
skating on the rink, so red you'd have thought a murder  
had occurred, leaving the training early, because she had to,  
had to, 'clean it up'. Olympians don't bleed,  
if you have a nosebleed, you hold it, why the dramatics,  
when I skated, I could control my nose bleeds, I feel that it's not  
too big of an ask.

## An Apology Poem

*Ciara Butler*

*From The Point of View of a Sister*

This is just to say, I have hit your eye  
with a blue nerf, because I have great aim,  
unlike yours, but you need your eye, I guess,  
I wish you could dodge, but I guess  
you'll never be as fast as me.

## Something I Noticed

*Ciara Butler*

The whistling wind, chasing after me like its prey,  
its whistling in my ear, taunting me, crashing into me head on,  
fighting me and my fringe, trying desperately to part it  
like the Red Sea, my hairspray holding strong, giving everything  
it has, anything to stop the hair strands from breaking free,  
the hairspray, resilient, begging the wind to keep trying,  
it reassures me, while the wind is strong and powerful,  
the hairspray can take on any force of nature, and will always  
retaliate with its 72-hour hold.

# Haiku

*Ciara Butler*

Silence as I sprint,  
my breath visible in the cold air,  
running in the dark frost.

Popcorn rustling,  
people on a silver screen,  
watched by spectators in seats

Neon ball bouncing,  
being thwacked across,  
by figures in white

Countdown champagne,  
high heels discarded and forgotten,  
gold glitter everywhere

Another year,  
presents and cake galore,  
all for an age

Suitcases,  
gate numbers called,  
strangers from all over

## Poem About Something I Hate

*Ciara Butler*

Leeches, harmless slimy, you think they are safe.  
You trust it, let it touch your skin, but slowly, it starts to hurt,  
takes your blood and energy, it happily leaves you,  
but squeaks if I step away, it complains and is self-centred,  
but rolls its eyes if you have the nerve to speak up, you say  
your arm hurts, it says you'll survive, it gets a scratch,  
and you have to listen, all day all night, you get more tired,  
while it gets more confident, leaching your popularity energy,  
as if it's its own. You've stopped laughing, while it uses  
your jokes, you now have no one, as it has leached  
you away from others, friends family pushed aside,  
for this monster, who called you a friend, but what's a friend?  
does a friend use and abuse you, does a friend make you  
cry not laugh? Do they leach off of you, taking your blood  
energy, happiness, until there's nothing left to see, except  
the empty shell, of the person you once were? Should a friend  
care, that they hurt you? Yes, I think they should.

## Persona Poem

Ciara Butler

*from Gwen's Point of View  
(a Racist, Conservative, Donald Trump Supporter)*

I don't like this woman, her smelly smoke puffing into my sweet face. Richard is such a dear man, so sweet, he reminds me of my dear dear boy Tom, so brave even after what that horrid girl accused him of, I cannot say that word, girls are so emotional these days, my boy cannot even get close to the girl without all this prison nonsense, back in my day girls were seen not heard, I hear some girls calling it that awful word used by the youth, what is it, ah yes, *oppression*, I think more people should listen to my dear friend Donald, his message is so inspiring, so true, so... *impeccable*. I completely agree that locker room talk is so important for the young men of today's society, and his messages about those dark-skinned, angry humans, the abuse and the marching, just so angry, all this violence, what did we ever do to them?

## Five Word Challenge #2

Ciara Butler

Flying unicorn, dropping gold below,  
innocent passers-by, squashed to death,  
fruity doppelgangers, crying for their other half,  
their grief interrupted, by another falling brick  
of gold, crushing them instantly, 'too bad',  
the unicorn flies away, leaving rainbows behind,  
and dead bodies, in its wake.

## Where I'm From

*Ciara Butler*

They wonder where I am from, and who's my mysterious man.  
If I said I can't tell her, because of my NDA, would she know where I'm from?  
Where I'm from, the Los Angeles smog makes you cough,  
where I'm from, the scent of lilies lingers in the air,  
I'm from Dwayne Johnson's house, the sun shooting through  
the endless glass windows, where I'm from, wild beasts prowl,  
some call them *Chihuahuas*, not me, they snap at your ankles and bark  
from their prams, as victims of Botox push them along,  
Where I'm from there are no bird chirps,  
If you hear a chirp it's usually from the TV, or from the plastic object  
clutched in the grubby hand of a spoiled child, wailing to their nanny  
about some frivolous issue, where I'm from everyone loves dogs,  
particularly the types that are small and speak a lot, begging to be kicked,  
where I'm from the cats are angels, when I see a cat, a smile creeps  
onto my face, cats can't bark, they are quiet, where I'm from,  
the local idiot hosts parties with his whitened smile, and fake-tanned face,  
going on about his big car, big house, yet never his big belly, funny enough.

## Five Word Challenge #3

*Ciara Butler*

Gold fly, its fruity doppelganger  
trailing behind, the glittery unicorn  
trying to remain unseen,  
despite the rainbow,  
forever following behind,  
stuck to its backside.

# Need

*Cliona Brennan*

You make me feel at home  
You're the epitome of peace  
I no longer feel alone  
I needed this release

Your brown doe eyes  
The life that you lead  
All makes me realise  
It is you that I need

People will say we're young  
That these feelings won't last  
But you're like the air in my lungs  
Needed with every second that passes

I feel this magnetic attraction  
Pulling us together  
You're my only option  
Nothing else could be better.



## I'm Sorry

*Cliona Brennan*

I'm sorry you went through the trouble  
of facilitating me.

but when it came to execute it,

I was nowhere to be seen.

I should have stayed for nutrition class,

that was kind of mean

so next class, for you,

the dishes I will clean.

## The Shiniest Red Apple

*Jessica Byrne*

All she wore was gold

It dripped from her eyes like heavy-awaited tear drops

Her ideas soared through the sky

Flying past each blank-faced dark crow

Dragons envy her power, her strength

I used to believe I too was her doppelgänger

A jealous dried fruit next to the shiniest red apple

The fruit bowl is a funny place

Each of us the same yet treated so different

## What if Mona Lisa?

*Jessica Byrne*

I sat still in front of him, with my best smile  
Envious of his gracious power  
Like an open book, articulating the feelings  
I could not express.  
Different hues of brown engulfed his piece of me  
I used my hand to steady the other and brushed my hair  
from my chest. I felt exposed as he stole each of my emotions  
*Is my smile expressing me?*  
*Is my nose too big and pointy?*  
*Is my attempt at confidence convincing?*  
*Does my skin look clear?*  
*Does he know too much?*  
I sat still in front of him, *I hope I look okay.*  
*This is my best smile*

## Force of Nature

*Jessica Byrne*

He called her a force of nature  
Because he did not understand her  
Although he had created her.  
He was calm and windless,  
While she was a hurricane  
Of highs and lows,  
A sea of emotion  
Just waiting to collide

## Sting Like Ice

*Jessica Byrne*

The feeling used to sting like ice

My voice would shake screaming, each emotion engulfing my body

The feeling used to sting like ice

Heavy puddles of salted water dripped from my eyes,

daring to dirty my round glasses

The feeling used to sting like ice

picking up my phone was always scary from then on

The feeling used to sting like ice

I felt cold to the world, neglected from the stereotypical society

The feeling used to sting like ice

How long could I keep everything to myself before

it tore apart each limb of my worthless body

The feeling stopped stinging like ice

As summer crept up from beneath us

The sun gifted us light

# My Moonlight

*Jessica Byrne*

Oh tonight I swear to you,  
Beneath our crisp full moon shining bright,  
How I look at the sunrise and sunsets,  
The far-off mountains filled with green,  
The fetch of blue magnificent water,  
each garden with blooming roses and pink tulips  
And the beautiful rays of mid-day sun.  
I will always remember  
The love ye share is as beautiful,  
As the most beautiful things in life.  
Some flowers may look alike in a certain light,  
Some clouds may be as fluffy as their neighbour,  
Some birds may chirp the same song,  
Whilst echoing a beauty always to be seen,  
Yours only so beautiful as to not look alike,  
no other meets the match of your love.  
Yours as rare as one in a million.  
What ye have is so beautiful because,  
No one else can share your luck.  
—You are my beautiful one in a million

# I'm 16 Once

*Jessica Byrne*

I realised I loved being a teenager  
I get to romanticise every day and every moment  
as if it's the last second of my life  
I dance around in the rain  
chase butterflies  
I step on autumn leaves  
while walking around to get hot drinks  
in the cold mornings  
I get to wear nice clothes  
Wear bold eyeliner  
I have crushes on random people  
make foolish bets  
get to hang around with my friends  
I walk around bookstores  
I keep falling in love with fictional characters  
if I was to sell my soul for one thing  
it would be to live like this forever

## St. Vincent's Secondary School

Poetry by

**Sarah Kidney**

**Alishia Lynch**

**Tyobista Araya**

**Sintija Sarkovska**

**Lilly-Anna Matta**

**Lexi Maher**

**Soairse O'Leary**

**Mary O'Halloran**

**Christabel Isonarae**

**Chaniece Crowley**

**Leyla Rose McCarthy**

**Kayleigh Martin**

Assisting Writer: Tina Pisco

T.Y. Coordinator: Jill Neill

Workshops held in St. Vincent's



The Unfinished Book of Poetry is one of the most enjoyable and important projects that I have been involved in. This is the third time that I have worked with a school on this project and what a delight it has been. Each group of students has grown over the course of the nine-week project, gaining confidence and determination in having their own voices heard.

Our children are in education from four to eighteen years old. In that time, they are mainly taught how to do things “the right way”, and how to avoid being “wrong”. There is often little space left for exploring, journeying, and playing in the adventure park that is creativity. The Unfinished Book of Poetry project gives them the time and space to express themselves without the fear of being “wrong”. It removes the yoke of there being a “right way”.

I bring to the table, various forms, and ideas: centos, haikus, villanelles and

free verse, rhythm, rhyme and repetition; but it is a joy to see them relax into the idea that these are guidelines, not rigid commands. It sometimes takes a few weeks, but the reward is to hear a young poet confidently say that they prefer to repeat a line three times instead of one, or use “could” instead of “would” in their poem. To have the group applaud a poem, and to see the poet’s joy at being praised by their peers, is wonderful.

The young women from St Vincent’s Secondary school were engaging, surprising and productive. Engaging in their enthusiasm for writing poetry. Surprising in their interests which included the Beatles, Morrissey and football. Productive in the many poems they wrote. This was a diverse group, representative of Cork today, and a shining reflection of young women on the cusp of adulthood. Once their initial shyness wore off and they settled into the task of writing poetry, they had no qualms about digging deep. Their poems are a testament to their intelligence, originality, and humour.

**Tina Pisco**





# Poems

St. Vincent's Secondary School



# Change

*Sarah Kidney*

*for all the people gone before me*

I used to love change  
The change in the weather  
Changing friends

I loved change

I hate change  
The change in feelings  
The change in people  
The change in my room

Something that never changes  
Is my love for you,

The way I miss you,  
Every minute  
Of every hour  
Of everyday

## January

*Sarah Kidney*

Dark days into dark nights

Cold rain pitter patters off my window as I lay there waiting for the sun

New beginnings and resolutions I cannot keep, stalk my every move

Even when the new year comes, it feels like nothing's changed

## Sweet You

*Sarah Kidney*

Smooth, sweet, sugar that melts in my mouth

Bringing me back to when I was young.

It's the taste of spring,

Swinging on a swing with flowers under my feet.

It's the taste of Christmas,

Watching movies while wrapping paper crinkles every time we move.

It's the sweet taste that reminds me of you.

# Celestial Love

*Saoirse O'Leary*

In the celestial dance of night and day,  
The moon gazes upon the sun's golden ray.  
From afar, she admires his luminous glow,  
Her love for him, only the heavens know.

Each night she rises, bathed in his light.  
Fulfilling her purpose, shining so bright  
Though they never meet in their endless span  
Her devotion to him never wanes, never can.

Even as stars twinkle in the sky,  
The moon feels his absence, wonders why.  
She longs to be near him, to share his embrace,  
But destiny keeps them apart, in separate places.

The moon, a companion to the stars and sea,  
Yet her heart belongs to the sun eternally.  
So let the moon dance in the shimmering night  
And the sun blaze in the day's golden might.

Their love, a testament forever entwined  
In the celestial tapestry, their bond defined.

## Alone in the Past

*Saoirse O'Leary*

In the stillness of solitude, I remain  
Caught in the echoes of a past that won't wane  
Lost in the labyrinth of memories gone by,  
Yearning for solace, beneath the endless sky.

Haunted by shadows of days long past  
Trapped in the moments that couldn't last  
The weight of memories, a burden to bear  
A relentless cycle, a soul laid bare.

## Dark Chocolate

*Saoirse O'Leary*

The memories flood back just from the scent,  
Her house, the lake, the neighbours, her face.  
I don't like the flavour, but she does.  
The language barrier, the long-distance, the family, the dogs.  
It was fun. Now she's gone.

At least I got her number.

# The Birds and I

*Saoirse O'Leary*

The dull cold feel of the light grey sky  
The dull cold feel of the light grey sky  
The dull cold feel of the light grey sky  
Wondering how the birds up high can fly

The chimneys that can be seen  
The chimneys that can be seen  
Forever thinking if the birds have been

The red brick building we call a school  
The red brick building we call a school  
The red brick building we call a school  
And I'm stuck inside acting a fool

The posters of different shapes and sizes  
The posters of different shapes and sizes  
With text and images hiding surprises

Wishing to be a bird up high  
Wishing to be a bird up high  
Wishing to be a bird up high  
Forever free with my friends by my side

# Climate Change

*Alisha Lynch*

Climate Change  
Changing. Rioting. Dying.  
Rapidly Approaching its deadline  
Deathly

## Skiing

*Alisha Lynch*

Upon snowy slopes we glide  
Where dreams of winter truly reside

Ski to conquer peaks so high  
Underneath a boundless sky

With each turn we feel the thrill  
As gravity's forces we skilfully fulfil

The winter's grace embraces us all  
As we answer its adventurous call

Through frozen air we swiftly fly  
Leaving worries and cares behind

## Winter Blister

*Alisha Lynch*

Shadow that swallows  
Is what I can see over me  
From this misery

## Untitled

*Alisha Lynch*

The rain is falling heavily  
The rain is falling heavily  
The rain is falling heavily  
Creating a sound so heavenly

The bird is flying in the sky  
The bird is flying in the sky  
The bird is flying in the sky  
With wings spread oh so high

All the chairs are blue  
All the chairs are blue  
All the chairs are blue  
And I'm down in the dumps too

As fragile as a flower  
As sturdy as a chair  
As stubborn as a cow  
As smoky as a chimney



# Gaza

*Alisha Lynch*

In Gaza city where echoes  
of hope subside. Through  
the haze of conflicts  
they reside. Palestinians  
endure. Their spirits unbound.

Dreaming of peace on this sacred  
ground, “ceasefire beckons”  
a fragile truce. It seems  
yet whispers of uncertainty  
linger in their dreams.

A temporary pause in this  
relentless fight, but yearning  
for lasting calm day and night.

Amidst the rubble, they search  
for someone. Survivors, hearts  
heavy with grief, yet held by resilience.

## Appearances Deceive

*Saoirse O'Leary, Alishia Lynch and Sarah Kidney*

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree  
They told me. They lied  
Appearances can deceive

She finally felt seen  
She said she didn't mind  
The apple doesn't fall far from the tree

She felt that she was free  
She thought that she'd survived  
Appearances can deceive

In a room full of three  
She could feel as he eyed  
The apple doesn't fall far from the tree

He began to lean  
She thought that he was kind  
Appearances can deceive

She thought it was a dream  
She felt as if she'd tried  
The apple doesn't fall far from the tree  
Appearances can deceive

# Ah! Bowakawa, pousse pousse\*

*Mary O'Halloran*

I look up and see a yellow house with a chimney so high

While I walk through tall grass  
Slowly approaching the house  
I feel faint flowers cling to my bare ankles  
Smelling of Spring

The door of the house has a mouth  
It creaks slightly, asking to be opened  
Ever so politely  
I grant its wish and step inside

Dust dances around me, finding a home  
in my nose  
Inside the house I feel hundreds  
of large black eyes on me  
They ask why I intrude  
The cows moo and moo

Then I wake up, back aching from falling asleep in my chair

(\*John Lennon: #9 Dream)

# Melodia

*Mary O'Halloran*

The fields stretch out so far  
The fields stretch out so far  
While I stare through raindrops  
in the car

The weather is wet wherever we are  
The weather is wet wherever we are  
People frown, still I grin watching  
from afar

Even inside, the water drips in the jar  
Even inside, the water drips in the jar

I enjoy the rain playing along with my guitar

## The songs we were singing

*Mary O'Halloran*

Yesterday they sat in strawberry fields  
Backs pressed into wet, fragrant grass  
Smoke left mouths as well as thoughts

Touching the cold keys of the piano  
Sat inside the desolate Dakota  
Just didn't feel the same anymore

They wondered if it was all inferior?  
Something they shouldn't do?  
The future felt blurry and distant

So, they took this chance to ask him  
"Got anything new Johnny?"  
They knew to trust him, smart Beatle and all that

He grinned that familiar grin  
Aquiline nose ever so prominent  
"I've got somethin' all right"

And off they went, determined  
Even if it wasn't like before  
To be loved is to be changed

Every now and then  
They really did make a good one y'know  
And this time won't be any different

## Life is just a four-letter word

*Mary O'Halloran*

The wilting flower that sits on my desk distracts me from work.  
Time has destroyed its body,

Yet we still move on.

My mind wanders to places in time.  
The Rock 'N Roll that once kept us alive,

Yet we still move on.

While they rush and run, I'm stuck at my desk.  
My feet frozen, just a small smudge on this globe,

I can't move on.

I can't move on.

## Yene (*mine*)

*Tyobista Araya*

Confused. I wasn't supposed to be there.  
Or hit rock bottom or get stuck simply,  
broke down.

Though I made it back to you,  
that I could do a final good show,  
grow into something that you could endure.

You'd have thought after this hole.  
Only you were who meandered around my soul.

You built more competitors, and I get it because...  
Crossing it flat out,  
Through my heart and more  
Not understanding of how good or better I could have been  
For you.

What had led me to make it up to you, then  
All of a sudden, the glamour had gone.  
And tell me how I'm still not done.

# I know

*Tyobista Araya*

I know you  
But I don't know me  
You feel better,  
But is that really true?  
Do I really need to see it through?

I don't know.  
I really don't  
But what I really know well is you?

I know me.  
I don't know you,  
Even though I wish that all my wishes come true.

Now that I really know you.  
Do I know me?  
Am I trying to act like I know it all?

Until I could and roll  
back to you,  
maybe but for now that's all I know.



# Actions Speak Louder than words

*Tyobista Araya*

Actions speak louder than words

they said.

But for me it's the other way round.

What if I am incapable of putting my words into actions?

Then what?

Would you still believe that actions speak louder than words?

Even after my words connected

with your lonely soul?

Just like that story you left untold.

Then what?

Would you still believe actions speak louder than words?

## Rise above the challenges: A footballer's dream

*Christabel Isonarae*

On the field I stand tall and strong,  
with dreams of glory, I can't go wrong.  
But will setbacks come with injuries and strife?  
Can I overcome them and continue this life?  
In this game I love, challenges may arise,  
but I won't let them dim my passions.  
With every setback I'll rise, and fight  
determined to reach my goals with all my might.  
Injuries may test my strength and will,  
but I'll bounce back stronger still.  
With each hurdle faced, I'll learn and grow,  
and show the World the footballer I know.

## Whisper of flowers: Nature's delight

*Christabel Isonarae*

In golden fields, flowers sway and bloom,  
Whispering secrets in the morning's gloom.  
Their petals soft like whispers in the breeze,  
Their fragrance dances, a gentle tease.  
From sunrise to sunset, their colours sing,  
A mix of hues, a radiant fling.  
Each flower tells a story, a delicate tale,  
Of life's fleeting beauty in a fragrant trail.  
In lush gardens, they fill the air,  
A tapestry of petals, beyond compare.

Roses red, lilies fair, Daisies dancing without a care.  
With every petal, a moment's grace,  
A reminder of life's transient pace.  
In their beauty, they create a scene,  
A testament to nature serene.  
So, let's cherish each flower's bloom,  
In gardens, meadows, in every room.  
For in their essence, we find delight,  
A reminder of joy in nature's light.

## Reds' Anthem: The Spirit of Liverpool FC

*Christabel Isonarae*

In Liverpool town, there's a team so good  
With fans who cheer and clap their hands  
They wear the red, they sing so loud  
Their love for the game makes them proud  
On Anfield's pitch, they play with might  
Their skill and passion shine so bright  
From Klopp's leadership to Salah's speed  
They chase the victory, fulfilling the need  
In European nights, under stadium lights  
They fight for glory with all their might  
From Shankly's era to modern-day  
Their spirit in the game will always stay  
So, here's to Liverpool FC, shining so bright  
A beacon of hope in the darkest night  
With every match, they strive and cope  
In the hearts of fans, there will always be hope

## Outside

*Sintija Sarkovska*

Raindrops falling from the sky,  
Raindrops falling from the sky,  
Some dance while some cry.

As droplets dance and clouds collide,  
As droplets dance and clouds collide,  
Water cleansing the earth tonight.

As the world sleeps, the rain paints its art,  
As the world sleeps, the rain paints its art,  
A masterpiece created from the heart.

Nature's tears, a symphony in the night,  
Nature's tears, a symphony in the night,  
Washing away worries, bringing pure delight.

## Live Life

*Sintija Sarkovska*

In the vibrant globe, where dreams ignite,  
Flowers bloom, painting colors so bright.  
Alive with rhythm, rock 'n roll takes hold,  
Work hard, let your passions unfold.  
A symphony of life, a story to be told.

## Latvia

*Sintija Sarkovska*

In the land of amber and pine, where nature's beauty intertwines,  
Lies Latvia, a country so divine, with treasures that forever shine.  
From the cobblestone streets of Riga, its capital so grand,  
To the enchanting castles across the land.

Explore the charming old town, where history comes alive,  
With its medieval architecture, a sight that will revive.  
Stroll along the sandy beaches, where the waves gently kiss the shore,  
And let the tranquility of Jurmala leave you wanting more.

So, let Latvia's beauty and culture unfold,  
A place where memories are made, stories to be told.  
With each visit, a deeper love for this land will grow,  
Latvia, a treasure worth getting to know.

## Cottage

*Sintija Sarkovska*

In a cozy farmhouse, let me paint a scene,  
Where a cow grazes on pastures green.  
By the window, a chair sits with care,  
Inviting us to relax and share.  
Through the open door, a flower blooms,  
Filling the room with sweet perfumes.  
Above, a chimney releases gentle smoke,  
As warmth and comfort gently evoke.

# Controversial Comments on the Headlines

*Chaniece Crowley*

Controversial comments hit the headlines,  
the format is short and fast,  
people want to share with their friends

it's almost like a hobby,  
the most exciting questions

TikTok, influencers,  
it's just their opinion,  
people trust popularity

it's their chance to publicly diss each other,  
not everyone can take criticism on the chin

an unbridled, unqualified attack on his business,

it was bizarre,  
just someone's opinion

bromance is a millennial fairytale,  
no, he didn't say anything about the impending divorce

# The Vessel

*Chaniece Crowley*

In the depths of choice, a silent plea,  
A heart's whisper lost in uncertainty.  
Life's tangled web, fraught with pain,  
Decisions made, in shadows lain.

A delicate dance, of rights and wrongs,  
Echoes linger in the unsung songs.  
In the quiet of night, a soul's debate,  
The weight of choice, an eternal fate.

Whispers of hope, amid the sorrow,  
A path chosen, with no tomorrow.  
Yet in the silence, a truth remains,  
The heartache, the loss, the lingering pain.

In the realm where darkness meets light,  
A story unfolds, in the depths of night.  
With empathy's touch, may healing start,  
In the tender spaces of a wounded heart.

# January

*Chaniece Crowley*

January frost, a quiet start,  
New beginnings whisper in the heart.  
Cold air bites, the year unfurls,  
In January's grasp, the world twirls.

## Mundane Mondays

*Chaniece Crowley*

In school's grip, woes abound,  
Where joy fades and stress is found.  
Chains of routine, heavy and tight,  
In the monotony, spirits take flight.

## Cold Brewing February

*Lilly-Anna Matta*

Everything's moving while I'm standing still.  
Everything's moving while I'm standing still.  
Writing my poem about the view outside the window

A car indicates, he wants to turn right,  
A car indicates, he wants to turn right,  
A car indicates, he wants to turn right,  
Reflections of the tree he passes, slowly fade from the hood.

Rain floods the roads,  
Rain floods the roads,  
It rushes down the drain failing to escape from itself.



# A Squash and a Squeeze

*Lilly-Anna Matta*

I open the door to the kitchen and to my surprise  
I see a cow tucked in nice and tight  
Safe and sound  
In my chimney

In my panic I grab the wooden chair that I bought from Ikea  
And hit the cow that's stuck in my chimney  
Now I feel bad  
Why would I do that?

Instead of saying sorry  
I pluck a flower from my neatly clipped garden  
One bright yellow daffodil  
Put it on the floor

I feel the cow stir  
Step back expecting a scene  
But the decorated black blobbed animal cranes its neck forward  
To graze on the delicate petals of the flower

As I lean against my shorter than average table  
With my arms folded across my chest  
I let it sink in that yes  
There is a cow inside my house

## Fire Blazing

*Lilly-Anna Matta*

After my hibernation ends  
The light comes back in  
To remind me that the year can start anew  
And I can sprint pass the errors  
I made last year  
To make this one better

All things must pass  
So, the cold will soon be gone  
And I can smile in the sunshine once more

## All Possibilities

*Lilly-Anna Matta*

I don't know if it'll rain tomorrow  
And what will I pack to ski?  
I know I believe in what I say  
And that my name is Lilly-Anna  
What could my first tattoo be?  
I know that I'll always find time for music  
But after secondary school where will I end up?  
I know I'll be fine either way.

# Return to me: A Letter to John from Paul

*Lilly-Anna Matta*

Music wasn't always such an old man's game  
Which is why my eyes twinkled

Remembering when I saw you standing there  
Guitar in hand  
Buddy Holly glasses sitting on the bridge of your  
nose  
The image never went away

Now and then I think  
About something in the way we moved each  
other  
With our words

And just look at us  
Oh  
How lucky we were to come together when we  
did  
Would you still have needed me when I turned 64?  
The thought is shelved  
For life goes on within you and without you

## Golden Hope

*Leyla Rose McCarthy & Lilly-Anna Matta*

The warm lights hang down,  
Christmas spirit is now here,  
It's that time of year.

## Chocolate

*Leyla Rose McCarthy*

Sprouting from a tree  
To fuel someone's greed  
One man's change  
Another man's wage  
It seems so neat  
But it's bittersweet

## Promise

*Lexi Maher*

You made me a promise  
that you would always  
be with me.

But that promise soon faded  
as I watched you lie  
in pain in that hospital  
bed.

I knew that it was time  
to distance myself.

Honestly, I didn't think  
of how we didn't  
say goodbye.

As you always said "It's  
not goodbye, It's see  
you later."

It hurts to be something.

It hurts more to be nothing  
without you.

## Spring

*Lexi Maher*

If I had to describe you as a season  
I would call you Spring.  
You remind me of the beauty of  
blooming flowers,  
and the comforting embrace of a day,  
not too cold, or not too hot.  
A day where all grows greener and the sun  
doesn't burn,  
and the clouds don't darken.  
Spring.  
The season that alone suits you  
the most.

## Happiness

*Lexi Maher*

Happiness is the moment we cherish  
A feeling that will never perish  
It's the memories we hold dear  
And the moments that bring us cheer  
It's the joy that's found in simple things  
Like the sound of birds  
That morning brings  
It's the kindness in someone's smile  
And the hope that lasts a while

## Promise

*Kayleigh Martin*

In summer's embrace, the sun's warm kiss,

Awakens the earth in a sweet bliss.

Fields of green and skies of blue,

Nature's canvas, ever anew.

Whispers of wind through trees so tall,

As laughter dances, free for all.

Golden rays caress each flower's face,

In this season of boundless grace.

## Gaelcholáiste Choilm

Poetry by

**Caragh Ní Loingsigh**

**Rose Ní Shúilleabháin**

**Josh De Búrca**

**Naoise Ní Shúilleabháin**

**Cara Ní Shúilleabháin**

**Seán Ó Conaill**

**Laura Ní Ghiollabháin**

**Caoimhe Ní Loingsigh**

**Tara Ní Chúipéir**

**Ríonagh Ní Laoire**

Assisting Writer: Colm Ó Ceallacháin

T.Y. Coordinator: Niamh Ní Ghealbhain

Workshops held in Ballincollig Library

Assisting Librarian: Stephen Leach



Bhain mé an-taitneamh as a bheith ag obair le rang na hidirbhliana ó Ghaelcholáiste Choilm. Tháingamar le chéile i dtús an gheimhridh, agus leanamar orainn as sin isteach san earrach. Mar is léir ó na dánta atá scríofa ag an ngrúpa seo, ní raibh siad díomhaoin lena linn. Tá féith na cruthaitheachta, ina iliomad cló, i ngach ball den ghrúpa.

Ceann des na rudaí ba thaitneamhaí faoi na ceardlanna a bhí againn ná nach raibh aon leisce ar an ngrúpa dul i mbun pinn. Creidim gurbh fhearr leo bheith ag cumadh filíochta ná ag éisteacht liomsa ag plé dánta, agus d'fháiltigh siad thar rud ar bith eile leis na tréimhsí ciúnais sin ina raibh deis acu dul i mbun pinn.

Tá a léamh féin ag gach uile bhall den ghrúpa ar an saol, agus tá seo le feiceáil sa réimse ábhar agus téamaí a roghnaigh siad. Ba phléisiúir domsa iad a fheiceáil



agus iad ag tabhairt faoina gcuid saothar, go mall ar dtús ach ansin le fonn. Ní raibh teora le cruthaitheacht na mball a thúisce is a thosnaigh siad ag scríobh, agus cé go raibh orm, ó am go chéile, stop a chur leis an scríbhneoireacht ceal ama, táim lánchinnte gur lean an grúpa ag cumadh leo im éagmais, agus tá a fhianaise sin sna dánta breátha atá os bhur gcomhair anseo. Bhí spiorad dearfach comhpháirtíochta le brath tríd na ceardlanna ar fad, agus measaim gur chabhraigh na rannpháirtithe go mór lena chéile nuair a bhí gá le focal moltach nó dhó. Go deimhin tá sampla nó dhó sa chnuasach seo de dhánta atá scríofa ag cuid de na baill lena chéile, rud álainn amach is amach le feiceáil.

Míle buíochas leis na filí seo as a gcuid smaointe a roinnt liom, agus buíochas le foireann na scoile i nGaelcholáiste Choilm, agus le Niamh Ní Ghealbhan ach go háirithe, a chabhraigh leo an deis sin a thapú. Gabhaim buíochas freisin le foireann na leabharlainne i mBaile an Chollaigh as an seomra a chur ar fáil dúinn, agus le Paul Casey as gach uile rud a thabhairt le chéile go cumasach, mar a dheineann sé i gcónaí. Tá filí óga Chorcaí go mór faoi chomaoin aige.

Ba chóir go mbeadh gach uile scríbhneoir a bhfuil a saothar sa chnuasach seo mórálach as a gcuid iarrachtaí, agus tá súil agam go mbaineann na léitheoirí a oiread pléisiúr astu agus a bhain mise astu agus mé á léamh i gcéaduair.

The transition year students from Gaelcholáiste Choilm came together for our first workshop back in autumn 2023, and have been working on these poems right through until March of this year. As is apparent from the poems published here, they have not been idle. One of the most enjoyable aspects of working with this group was to see how eager they were to create – I think they would have kept on writing whether I was there or not.

Every one of these young poets has given us their own unique take on the world and we should be thankful for the opportunity to hear those voices, in all their variety of tone and theme. I took particular pleasure in seeing these young poets

start out on the writing process – hesitantly at first, and then with increasing confidence. It seemed a shame at times to have to ask them to stop when we ran out of time, but I have no doubt that their work was continued elsewhere, as is evident from the well-polished and considered nature of the poems presented here. It was especially pleasing to see how eager they were to read their work, sometimes aloud, and at other times quietly to a trusted friend or two. There are, indeed, a number of poems in this collection which were written by the poets to each other, a true sign of the friendship that was apparent all through the workshops.

Thanks to Gaelcholáiste Choilm, and to Niamh Ní Ghealbhain in particular for giving them the opportunity to showcase their work, and to the staff at Ballincollig Library for facilitating us. Thanks as always to Paul Casey for bringing everything together – the young poets featured in the various editions of the Unfinished Book of Poetry owe him a great debt.

All of those featured in this year's edition should be very proud of what they have achieved. I hope that you will get as much pleasure from reading their work as I did in witnessing them bring it to life.

**Colm Ó Ceallacháin**

# Poems

Gaelcholáiste Choilm



## Beach

*Caragh Ní Loingsigh*

Tá beach sa teach  
Céard a dhéanfaimid  
Mearbhall is gruaim tríd is tríd

Bzz, bzz, ciúnas  
Suaimhneas sa teach  
Mise is mo chlann ag faire amach

Titeann oíche, mo cheann ina roithleán  
Braithim aois fiche  
Camán im lámh

Ní fiú cluiche é  
Táim dáiríre  
Deireadh na beiche le teacht!

## Mo ghrá geal

*Caragh Ní Loingsigh*

Suaimhneas i do bhaclainn  
Isteach sa teach linn  
Grá im chroí  
Is i ngach aon ní.

## Mo chara

*Caragh Ní Loingsigh*

Duine suimiúil, aireach é  
Dhá shúil, dhá chluas is béal  
Foclóir gleoite, séimh, bog  
Tógann sé a chuid ama  
Duine álainn istigh is amuigh.

Foighne agus tuiscint gan teorainn  
Grá gan limistéar mar an gcéanna  
Saol gan Josh, saol gan bhrí  
Mo chuisle, mo scéal, m'aisling, mo chroí.

## An Fómhar

*Rose Ní Shúilleabháin*

An aimsir ag athrú, an ghrian ag dul  
Na páistí ag fáil réidh le dul ar ais ar scoil  
Faigheann na duilleoga seandaite  
Ón am seo amach beidh an samhradh ina aimsir chaite  
Méadóidh an bháisteach i gcomhair scaithimh  
Hata agus scairf á gcaitheamh  
An teocht chomh híseal le do chóta mór  
Réidh don fhómhar

## Nollaig

*Seán Ó Conaill*

Nollaig shona atá ann  
Soilse ildaite ar gach teach  
Bronntanais bheaga faoi chrann  
Leaba go luath, iníon agus mac.

## Spring

*Seán Ó Conaill*

Long days again  
A time for growth and life  
Flowers appear.

Birds warbling at morn  
Cold weather leaves again  
New life is born  
Sweet song by a small wren.

## Saol Álainn

*Josh De Búrca*

Cén mhéid den saol a bhfuilimid tar éis bualadh leis?

Cén mhéid atá fós le teacht?

B'fhéidir go bhfuil orainn dul tríd an gceann seo

Le teacht go ceann nua.

Agus mar sin tá mé sásta

Dul trí mo dheacrachtaí

Mar táim ag cothú saol álainn

Dúinn sa todhchaí.

## Caragh

*Josh De Búrca*

Conas ar féidir liom é seo a rá?

An bhfuil focail le cur síos ar an méid seo grá?

Riamh i mo shaol níor thuig mé cén fáth

Aistríonn sí é gan deacracht gach lá

Gach uile uair a deireann sí

'Haigh' liom braithim gliondar i mo chroí.

Tá cara i Caragh agus déanann sé ciall

An bhfuil éinne chomh cneasta? Dar liomsa níl!

## Ríonagh

*Josh De Búrca*

Rothaíocht sa samhradh, siúlóid sa gheimhreadh  
I gcónaí táim sásta taobh le Ríonagh  
Ón gcéad lá gur bhuaile mé leat bhí sé soiléir  
Nach bhfuil spréacha eadrainn ag eitilt san aer?  
Agus i ndeireadh mo dháin caithfidh mé a rá  
Go bhfuil cairde agat le fada an lá  
Hey Ríonagh! Tá mo chroí lán de ghrá!

## My Phone

*Josh De Búrca*

A light show to dazzle our unsatisfied minds  
An addiction that nothing can help  
I see her, I see him, I see every single thing  
Only when I turn it off do I see myself.

## Fan Liom

*Josh De Búrca*

'Fan liom' na focail a thit as mo bhéal  
Ach mhínigh sé go raibh a bhóthar thart  
Tháinig deora chuig mo shúile ach chuir mé cosc le mo theanga  
Tuigim go bhfuil sé i gceart.



## Ceol

*Josh De Búrca*

Ceol ag damhsa trí mo chluas  
Mar chónagar chuig mo chroí  
Braithim mo chorp i ngach buille  
Braithim mé féin sna liricí.

## Domhan na Samhlaíochta

*Laura Ní Ghiollabháin*

Ag suí i mo sheomra,  
Leabhar i mo lámh,  
Gach duine sa teach  
Ag codladh go sámh.

An lampa ar lonradh,  
Tá'n seomra lasta buí,  
Táim ag sú gach uile sonra  
Sula théim i mo luí.

Domhan na samhlaíochta  
Lán de dhraíocht, gan mórán brí,  
Téim ann gach oíche  
Gan mé fiú ag fágaint an tí.

## Foireann an tSolais

*Laura Ní Gbiollabháin*

Pléasc mhór dhathanna  
Frithchaite i mo shúile,  
Cóisir scoir na ngathanna  
Léirithe le dathanna suimiúla.

Athraíonn sé go dubh,  
Tá'n dorchadas fuar agus tiubh,  
Sul i bhfad, tá sé níos gile,  
Tá an solas i réim inniu.

In éineacht leis na réaltaí,  
Bíonn an ghealach ag faire orainn,  
Go dtí go dtagann an ghrian arís,  
Go laethúil, ag obair mar fhoireann.

## Na Cnoic i bhfad Uainn

*Laura Ní Gbiollabháin*

Tá na géaga éirithe gann,  
Níl na duilleoga lán de dhath.  
An geimhreadh atá ann,  
Anois tá an fuacht le brath.

An ghrian ag scoilteadh na gcloch,  
Páistí ag spraoi agus ag súgradh.  
Bhí mé ag tnúth leis an lá seo,  
An lá a bheadh an geimhreadh múchta.

Ach braithim uaim na tinte,  
Blaincéad agus cupán tae ar mo ghlúin.  
Bhíodar i gceart sa seanfhocal sin, cinnte,  
“Is glas iad na cnoic i bhfad uainn.”

## Suíomh mo Chroí

*Laura Ní Ghiollabháin*

Ag suí cois farraige  
in aice na gcarraigeacha,  
sa bhaile nó thar lear,  
is í seo an áit is fearr.

Na tonnta ag bualadh ar an trá,  
tá mo chroí lán le grá  
don áit suaimhneach agus buí,  
is é seo suíomh mo chroí.

## Cumhacht

*Caoimhe Ní Loingsigh*

Thuas ar an gcnoc,  
lámha ar mo chromáin,  
im sheasamh go hard,  
ag féachaint síos ar gach éinne,  
mise, leis an gcumhacht go léir.

## Clabhsúr

*Caoimhe Ní Loingsigh*

Cad a tharla eadrainn?  
Cén fáth ar tharla sé?  
Ní bheidh freagra agam riamh, faraor.

## Ná himigh

*Caoimhe Ní Loingsigh*

Ar dtús bhí mo chroí ina choinne,  
Ar dtús bhí fuath agam dó.  
Ach anois táim ar mhalairt intinne,  
Ní theastaíonn uaim go gcríochnódh sé.  
Ba mhaith liom fanacht anseo go deo.

## Rinne mé é

*Caoimhe Ní Loingsigh*

Rang i ndiaidh ranga,  
Uair i ndiaidh uaire,  
Lá i ndiaidh lae,  
Scrúdú i ndiaidh scrúdaithe,  
Táim cáilithe faoi dheireadh,  
Rinne mé é.

## An lá is fearr riamh!

*Caoimhe Ní Loingsigh*

An seomra lán de shonas,  
Páistí ag gáire agus ag spraoi,  
An lá is fearr riamh, dar leo,  
Go dtí gur tháinig an lá dár gcionn.

## I remember it...

*Caoimhe Ní Loingsigh*

I remember it like it was yesterday,  
I remember it as a dream,  
I remember it so clearly,  
I remember it like I'm still living it.

## Shouting

*Naoise Ní Shúilleabháin*

Loud frantic screams fill my head  
Constant shouts bound around  
Thoughts of guilt, fear and dread  
I'm swarmed by continuous sound  
Even as I lie peacefully in my bed.

## Foirfe

*Naoise Ní Shúilleabháin*

An gá dom a bheith foirfe?  
Gan dabht ní gá, ach cén fáth go mbraitheann  
mo shástacht ar an marc a fhaighim?

## Ealaín

*Naoise Ní Shúilleabháin*

Leathanach glan is bán.  
Gan deireadh le féidearthachtaí.  
Níl aon rud le rá.  
Mé féin is mo pheann luaidhe  
Anois, líonta le healaín – is é lán.

## Céilí

*Naoise Ní Shúilleabháin*

I sraitheanna de línte tá'n halla lán,  
Gach duine réidh do sheinm an amhráin.  
Tosnaíonn siad, a haon, dó, trí,  
Is críochnaíonn siad le ballaí Luimnigh.

## Saol ar Scoil

*Tara Ní Chúipéir*

Ag eirí go luath  
Ag a seacht tríocha gach lá  
Cad eile atá le rá?

## An Cluiche

*Tara Ní Chúipéir*

The dirty tackle,  
Provokes a crackle,

The free is given,  
To the taker that's driven,

The sliotar is placed on the grass,  
In hopes it would be a draw at last.

## Fadó

*Tara Ní Chúipéir*

Is minic a fheicim thú i m'aigne  
le miongháire mór,

Seachtain, mí, bliain,

Tá dearmad déanta agam  
ded ghruaig, ded ghuth, ded shúile,

Éirím neirbhíseach,

Cá bhfuil tú imithe?

Cén fáth?

Níl deireadh tagtha

Ní chreidim é,

Bhí tú linn inné.

## Lidl Plus

*Tara Ní Chúipéir*

Lidl Plus

My forever crush

The deals, the freebies

I'm forever introducing newbies!



## Cabhair

*Cara Ní Shúilleabháin*

Seanchupán d'airgead,  
Gan teach acu ach sráid,  
Cabhair le do thoil.

## Pier Jump

*Cara Ní Shúilleabháin*

Adrenaline rush,  
Hit by the icy water,  
Coming up to breathe.

## Ceolchoirm

*Ríonagh Ní Laoire*

Ceol ag seinm,  
spraoid san aer,  
atmaisféar spleodrach,  
ag ullmhú don cheolchoirm,  
sceitimíní orm.

## TY

*Ríonagh Ní Laoire*

Mo dheirfiúr ag foghlaim  
is mo dheartháir ag staidéar,  
mise amuigh le mo chairde,  
idirbhliain thar barr.

## Untitled

*Ríonagh Ní Laoire*

My head pounding,  
it's like nails on a chalk board,  
the colours spinning around me,  
all I want is my bed and peace.

## Teanga

*Ríonagh Ní Laoire*

Is í an Ghaeilge mo theanga dhúchais,  
ach mé ag smaoineamh i mBéarla ó aois linbh,  
Fraincis á foghlaim sa dara leibhéal,  
mo chloigeann lán d'fhocail.

## Scoil

*Ríonagh Ní Laoire*

Strus na scrúduithe,  
is na hathscrúduithe mar an gcéanna,  
'is é seo do sheans deireanach',  
níor chuala mé é sin riamh.

Obair bhaile in áit am saor,  
spraoi san aimsir chaite,  
comórtas idir scoláirí don ghrád is fearr,  
an obair os mo chomhair.

## Am

*Ríonagh Ní Laoire*

Ní stopann an t-am d'aon rud,  
ní domsa ná duitse,  
athraíonn bleibín go bláth,  
coileán go madra,  
páiste go duine fásta,  
bia blasta go lofa.

Imíonn an t-am i bpreabadh na súl,  
ní fhanann sé dúinn ná daoibh go brách na breithe.

## Éire

*Ríonagh Ní Laoire*

Tá grá agam do mo thír,  
na traidisiúin is na daoine,  
tuin is slite difriúla i ngach contae,  
féiniúlacht rathúil tar éis fás.

## Samhlaíocht

*Ríonagh Ní Laoire*

Ag léamh sa leabharlann,  
na scéalta os mo chomhair,  
samhlaíocht á húsáid agam,  
páiste arís mé i mo shuí ann.

## Spórt

*Ríonagh Ní Laoire*

Cúig huaire sa tseachtain,  
ag rith is ag imirt,  
brú ormsa,  
na súile ag féachaint.

## Seasons

*Ríonagh Ní Laoire*

As the seasons change, the colour palette differs,  
for blue matches winter, and yellow matches summer,  
spring filled with pinks and green, while autumn creates orange and red,  
the rainbow split into new beginnings, a new era starting,  
what colour is yet to come?

## Coláiste an Spioraid Naoimh

Poetry by

**Dylan Nowak**

**Lemor Carreon**

**Liam Hayes**

**Ben Ó Muirí**

**Eoin Bowdren**

**Dylan O’Callaghan**

**Sam Hodgins**

**Gaius Kettunen**

**Adam Lowther**

**Fionn Shannon**

**Namo Siller-Aziz**

**Bart Cierniak**

**Ben Callanan**

**Kieran Lane Panah**

**Cathal Twomey**

**Matthew O’Mahony**

Assisting Writer: John W. Sexton

T.Y. Coordinator: Anne Cleary

Workshops held at Coláiste an Spioraid

Naoimh and Bishopstown Library

Assisting Librarian: Mary Corcoran



It is a great honour for me to be returning to Coláiste an Spioraid Naoimh for this special twentieth anniversary issue of *The Unfinished Book*, a school that in the past I have had a wonderful creative relationship with for this project. Coláiste an Spioraid Naoimh has a long-standing literary ethos with regard to its students, and proof of this was evident this year amongst my sixteen poets, the majority of whom were already part of an energetic writers’ group that convenes in the school every Thursday lunchtime. And once again I found myself in amongst a community of young writers and poets who have already been seriously striving to develop their personal creativity.

During the sessions we covered a lot of ground and discussed a great wealth of

matters relating to poetry. And during the nine workshops the students wrote relentlessly. The selection here will give an idea of their concerns and styles, and what was very heartening was to see that these students were already developing their individual voices through their work.

The selections here encompass varied examples of approaches to poetry, from found poetry to song, from prose poetry to formal structures, from the assumed voice to the confessional and personal.

In approaching the teaching of poetry it is essential not to get too bogged down in analysis or to fetishize formal structures. Poetry is best when it breaks out like a fever; structure can always be imposed later. Indeed, fever is essential to developing one's own poetry. One of the most significant of Japan's Modernist Poets was the dazzling experimentalist Sakutarō Hagiwara. Hagiwara was a respected Tanka poet, an extremely formal and traditional verse form. He stayed loyal to Tanka his entire life, writing thousands of poems in that form and contributing important essays on Tanka practice and the Tanka tradition. However, it's a great irony that although his analysis of the form is greatly revered, Hagiwara's own Tanka poetry is universally considered to be undistinguished. His importance to modern Japanese poetry lies within his incursions into experimentalist approaches and free verse. And what distinguished that poetry was Hagiwara's true temperament. For although he was a great intellectual, he was also as mad as a cave of cats.

There is no greater blessing that can be made to a poet, but to wish them to be as mad as a cat. And in the pages from the students of Coláiste an Spioraid Naoimh you'll find much feline fever. It is madness, individuality, and deep eccentricity that will often imbue poetry with its essential prophetic energy. You'll find plenty of that here amongst these fine young poets.

**John W. Sexton**





# Poems

Coláiste an Spioraid Naoimh



## Disappearance

*Dylan Nowak*

Things you cherish most, thoughts overflow with ideas,  
solutions and much more, the fear of disappearing  
and by that produces no solutions for the cherished fruits  
of your world. Cherished fruits may be rotten,  
rotten is great as the fear of losing that cherished  
rotten fruit is great. The greatness of the act of disappearance  
is it comes with many results. Fear is most provoked  
when the cherished fruits are close to being crushed.  
Reality is quite a scare, as reality shows you the truth of fear.

## From the Vortex

*Dylan Nowak*

Spiralling skies create more beauty and curiosity.  
Spiralling can show much knowledge.  
Knowledge is hungry so it can throw up reality.  
Reality controls the fate of others by showing strict illusions.  
Strict illusions can force one to be boring.  
Boredom can peak curiosity to outside reality.  
Outside reality, reality shows what it's most scared of.  
Reality is scared of fate that can be turned.  
Turned as quickly or slowly as a clock.  
A clock is known as time.  
Time is perceived differently.  
Fate is hungry for difference as it lives longer.

## Water Flows Upwards

*Dylan Nowak*

It flows like a river of chaos;  
water is defined by nothing but its destructive forms,  
such as flowing swords known as art.  
Upwards with success and rides  
like the original fresh water from the northern ice.  
Gracefully, swimmingly, calmly,  
but desirable not for survival, but that its beauty is origin.  
The water flowing through your body  
has origins from the imagination, from your consciousness.  
The consciousness speaks in many ways but only through water.

## A Nice Cup of Tea

*Dylan Nowak*

I had tea, a big cup of tea made out of raspberries;  
it was red and sour. The red and sour taste tells  
about the conflict in this world. The sour tells  
the emotions, the anger, the bitterness to conflict,  
the red shows the blood of sacrifices in the cup:  
Both reflecting what war is about.  
But some like their tea sour and red in colour.  
They pay to taste it, they taste the sour raspberry  
to grow themselves in ways not many would like to.  
But soon the cup will overflow, which will reveal  
the judgement that will fall upon them in time,  
such as the time needed to fill a large cup for tea.

## Shadows

*Dylan Nowak*

Shadows, how dark they are. They hold many secrets.  
As I control the shadows, I witness the darkness of others.  
Only the darkness they see and others can't.  
Shadows' darkness has lots of darkness especially in the night.  
In the daytime only little bits of darkness are shown to the world.  
But I can see all of it with my power. But in exchange  
for using the power of darkness, mine grows itself;  
creates a dark side that not even light can defend against.

## Dearest Friend

*Dylan Nowak*

Oh dearest friend, you left so soon.  
I wish the time we spent was longer.  
If only I met you sooner. But that blasted  
curse got to you too quickly. I miss you.  
I wish I'd see you in my dreams playing games  
like we used to. If only, if only, the silliness we shared  
for a long time physically far away, but in spirit we were close.  
The teasing, the fun in the gone moments we had.  
If only that blasted curse didn't strike twice.  
But I hope you rest with me, your greatest friend,  
in your dreams. Oh dear friend, if only we could share  
the memories much longer in the present.  
For far much longer. I still miss you.  
If only I had a chance to say goodbye.

# Dog

*Dylan Nowak*

The loud dog,  
The dog that barks,  
The excited dog

Oh warm dog,  
Oh cuddly dog,  
Oh as dog should be

The silly dog,  
Sillier than a fish,  
It jumps around to anything that looks tasty

Oh warm dog,  
Oh cuddly dog,  
Oh as a dog should be

The dog that comforts me,  
A dog that barks in excitement to me,  
The one that growls when I don't pet him enough

Oh warm dog,  
Oh cuddly dog,  
Oh as a dog should be,  
The dog that saves me.

## A Boy

*Dylan Nowak*

Oh Dylan, how funny you were, super jumpy,  
truly a boy who lived off imagination.  
A creative boy who never wanted to grow up.  
Dylan, Dylan what a bundle of joy you were to yourself.  
A joy that only you could have.  
Dylan a boy that was stuck in his mind of creation.  
The mind filled with ideas that couldn't be handled by reality.  
A boy that wanted nothing but to live in his own world.  
He lived so much in his own world  
he changed the world around him into his own.  
Singing, dancing and playing whatever he wanted.  
Truly the most memorable of memories to have.  
Oh Dylan how I wish I could be you all over again.

## Difference

*Dylan Nowak*

Difference is seen as suspicious,  
it can be seen as beauty with a set-back.  
Beauty must have a deal, a contract, one that can be trusted  
and one that can be safe. Difference is truly caring and loveable  
but seen as hideous or outrageous. Difference can be truly  
a loveable thing if perceived as just. Just as everyone  
sees each other, contracts will be made but only made  
if a difference occurs. Occurrences are natural, beautiful

and have experience. Which are shared all over the world  
or only once in centuries. Difference truly  
has the greatest meaning to life. Without difference  
what life would exist? But even life has contracts, laws,  
especially rules. Existence is the meaning  
behind difference and occurrences.  
That truly captivates the light and darkness in this world.

## Dance

*Dylan Nowak*

Slow movement is always best,  
Till the beats drops fast like a thud from a beast.  
The beast beats the floor the movements grow  
Grow bigger and faster and betterrrrr,  
I dance till I drop  
I dance till I drop  
As the beats grow larger I fall even harder  
I feel like I can alternate any world  
As the beats grow bigger and faster and better,  
I dance harder and harder,  
Harder and HARDERRRRRR,  
And the beats grows larger and LARGERRRR  
I feel like I can alter my world.

## Bad Days Away

*Adam Lowther*

Dark days, dark days;  
light times, light times.  
My kingdom always there,  
time for us.

To reconcile  
in the darkness.  
To find the light,  
to always move on.  
To remember  
the good times.

To put the bad days away  
and to forgive them.

## Out of Its Box

*Adam Lowther*

A car, red, fast  
Wishing to travel  
Heading to this place  
Purple, Blue, Yellow, Green  
On the race track  
With others, others  
Beautiful scenery  
High technical functioning  
Finally there



## Many Would Dream

*Adam Lowther*

That singer, rock star,  
may face criticism, but  
always manages  
to make a return.

Visually dancing, performs, tonight  
to show the world  
our full potential.  
First special concert  
located at a place  
many would dream of.

## The Past Is Still Here

*Adam Lowther*

Year ago  
in school,  
faced with  
challenge. Student,  
hopeless, wronged.  
No one there;

in need of support.  
Then, teachers there;  
Management, supporting.  
Situation dealt with.  
Still haunts me.

## Always

*Adam Lowther*

The dog

White

Brown

Fluffy

As always

Its eyes

All hail

All hail

Eight years old

All hail

All hail

Their precious kingdom

All hail

All hail

Tonight, to be

Always here

## Through

*Adam Lowther*

Tonight with you,

having you in my arm.

Dark season, struggling.

The trees, strong wind.  
A brief glimpse of a star.  
The leaves, the branches  
breaking; like our hometown.  
At least, you are with me,

Through positive, dark  
times.

You are with me.

## Her Pet, the Cockroach

*Lemor Carreon*

Why did she bring it?  
Why did she like it?  
What does a person see in something like it?  
Something bound to die in a moment's passing;  
something so grotesque that it warrants animosity.  
Did she see something worth saving?  
Or a mere toy to play with?

I hated it.  
She knew this.  
Yet from time to time I had to deal with it,  
the thing I didn't like.

## Fear

*Lemor Carreon*

What do people fear?

Darkness, heights, doctors?

A saying goes:

*People fear what they don't understand.*

There is truth in this.

But it's missing the whole picture.

People fear how little they understand.

People know darkness,

are familiar with its blindness.

Yet they fear what could lie inside.

The unknown.

No,

Uncertainty.

## The Cuckoo Bird

*Lemor Carreon*

You crazy cuckoo bird

How goofy you are

A little silly Billy

A joker

A trickster

How don't they notice

When you switch their seed on entrance?

You put on a smile  
A face  
To hide your trace

A sin so vile  
infesting their nest;  
putting their hopes and dreams to rest.

## A Constant

*Lemor Carreon*

A childhood idol,  
a constant in chaos.  
The laughs that he gave us!  
We admired the way he rambled.  
He gave us a schedule,  
a weekly ritual.  
The knowledge he gave to so many!  
But through the years,  
the sweat and tears,  
it came to an end.

And I'm left with nothing  
but an emptiness inside.

I wonder where empathy hides?

## Two Souls

*Lemor Carreon*

Bound to a prison in the sky,  
forsaken by a tyrant  
for the old hag's sins:  
the greatest mind in Greece  
and his innocent apprentice.

The linen of time unravelled for months  
as the pair grew desperate.  
They clung to hope like moths to a light.  
An idea entered their heads,  
a godly sight.  
Faith in their talents  
treated them well,  
but would it work?  
Only time would tell.

Wings of angels  
that spread the horizons,  
granting mortals flight.  
The pair thus unshackled.  
But they were plagued with a blight.  
The apprentice's heart  
corrupted, transfigured,  
by nothing more than his own hubris.

## Honey Badger

*Lemor Carreon*

I need to

I need to eat

I have eaten

I am sleepy

I sleep

There is a place

I want to go

I go

I see lions

They will hurt me

They hurt me

I am back

I need to

I need to find lions

I need to hurt lions

I fight lions

I don't like lions

I go back

## Murphy

*Fionn Shannon*

Murphy is an old folk, he lives in his old folk home.

Murphy is not graceful, nor does he own a phone.

Murphy is content, though he has little scope to roam.

Murphy is peaceful though; he picks the odd bone.

## Glasses

*Fionn Shannon*

The glasses on my head are red,  
About them lots has been said.  
They help me see long distances,  
When I don't know what lies ahead.  
The glasses own a brief grey case.  
My glasses have never been to space.

## Operating Manual for My Coat

*Fionn Shannon*

To equip the coat, open all relevant pockets and or flaps.  
Ensure no pocket is left closed, lest it shock you.

Handle with care, a jacket pocket is a fickle plaything with a mind of its own.

Determine the correct placement of associated limbs.  
Do not fiddle with tags or you'll risk serious discomfort.



## Ziplines

*Fionn Shannon*

Sturdy were the ziplines of the fir wood.  
Though different colours, they were understood.  
The closing sound was enough,  
to lift myself out of the rough.

## The Blanket

*Fionn Shannon*

The blanket was blue and scented.  
It was a portal, to a realm much warmer.  
The interior was that of an iron kiln or a gust of desert wind.  
It was a shield, against the sound and cold of outside.  
The blanket would vanish, but appear the next day.  
The blanket would one day extinguish.  
But its warmth would remain.

## Washing Machine

*Liam Hayes*

- Do not turn on washing machine until ready.
- Open door to machine.
- Put newspaper in the hatch that locks door.
- Close door to machine, force required.
- Put all powder into machine drawer.
- Put on “Turbo Cycle”.
- Wait for beep.
- Open Machine door using newspaper as shimmy.
- Run out front door.
- Go Home.

## Grief

*Liam Hayes*

The Soldier has muscles the size of trees. His hair is a brilliant black.  
The soldier's gear is camouflaged and stealthy. His boots fit tightly to his shins.  
The enemy waits for him. His eyes lie dead and empty.  
The enemy plans a dastardly plan, bound to failure.  
The soldier spies the enemy and runs towards him. He begins to thump.  
The soldier's limbs tear into the enemy with the strength of a God.  
The enemy lies broken on the floor.

And though he was the enemy, I loved him dearly.

## Blood

*Liam Hayes*

When I was in primary school, myself and a girl went to get some paper.  
On the way back I tripped and fell on some steel capped steps.  
I slit my chin on the sharp caps and my jaw opened like a second mouth.  
It was the most blood I had ever seen at that point.  
The girl froze at the top of the steps, looking down at me with blank eyes.  
My own discount version of the shining.  
I was covered in thick red blood as a small girl looked at me like a stranger.  
For a few minutes I squirmed and writhed at the bottom of the staircase.  
My own blood around me in a pool.  
The girl slowly walked back to class, laughing at every step.

## Ink

*Liam Hayes*

The harsh black ink contrasts the small reflective patches of skin.  
My nose is flat against the page.  
My open eyes stare back at me, empty of all ideas.  
The faint ghost of eyebrows frame my eyes.  
A poor print.  
All from a moment of childlike glee,  
when I stuck my face on a photocopier.

## Cavies

*Liam Hayes*

They scattered up and down the ramps.  
They frayed away from curiosity.  
They were lazy and flat and didn't move.  
Wood chips coated their stomach.  
Their nails tore the wood from the ramps.  
Eating and sleeping and staying still.  
For something that moved so little,  
Their destruction was ravenous.

## Raven

*Liam Hayes*

A clever crook of devilish greed.  
I am good but never best.  
I am populous and everywhere.  
I am one-upped on everything.  
I fly, but I'm not the fastest.  
I cry, but I'm not the loudest.  
I frighten, but I'm not the scariest.  
I think, but I'm not the smartest.  
It is hard not being the best.  
It is hard not being the worst.  
I am not memorable.

## Silence

*Liam Hayes*

All my friends played GAA. They talked about it all day long. When I came to secondary, I realised I was not speaking with them. I saw them for 40 minutes every day for the express purpose of talking and I had not said a word to them in over a month. I had no interest, I was bored. I had to leave the only friends that I had ever made. It was terrifying. But now I look back and see how unhappy I was. I had taken a self-inflicted vow of silence.

## Greed

*Liam Hayes*

The man decided to eat. Bang! The neighbour's door crashes open as the man shoulders past a family of five. After five hours of crashes and crying, he comes out with one egg and one loaf of bread. The family is left dying and hungry. Then he proudly puts his spoils of battle in his cupboard. Where he keeps his hundreds of thousands of pristine perfect eggs and his hundreds of thousands of large floury loaves of bread.

## Voyage

*Liam Hayes*

Mankind has ascended from land to space, planet to galaxy, galaxy to universe. The void of emptiness lies around them, taunting them with nothing. But what lies beyond the universe; its never-ending wall of nothing stretches around them endlessly in every direction. They try to break and smash, but the wall lies firm. Eons and eons of useless “ventures”, all to see what lies beyond the nothing. They cannot be alone. They must find kinship. The money and resources go nowhere. Earth burns and people die.

## Love

*Liam Hayes*

I've found myself, caught against the wall.  
Fighting the feeling of feeling small.  
I'm crying out in thumping fear.  
Because I know that death is near.  
You are my angel, my guardian.  
I can't live without you, my oxygen.  
So my brothers and sisters, I ask of you.  
To take my hand and help me through.

## Art

*Liam Hayes*

The bottle was filled with liquified pencils.

Pencils used to fuel creativity.

Creativity so rampant it consumes the Body.

A Body neglected for eons on end, begging for substance.

The substance is all we need, but this is only according to ourselves.

## The Willow Tree Seat

*Liam Hayes*

I am sitting in a sunseting field on a cool summer day. The grass waves on to infinity. It is soft and vibrant. I am sitting in a willow tree. Its branches sag down and mesh together to form a chair. The chair I am sitting in. Before me is an orchard. It goes on as far as the eye can see. Each tree is uniform and perfectly shaped. Round plump apples dangle off each tree in the same places like gold and red baubles. The stumps are small and thin. The head of each tree is round and every leaf has a wavy texture. Beyond the orchard is a thick wild forest with a floor of six-foot-high nettles. Its grey-green and dark interior is a shadow and holds no depth. There is no light in this forest. I cannot peer inside. Then a big breathing and thumping emerges from inside the forest's darkness. It's a bear. Its pads softly destroy all in its path. It steps into the light. Now I see it. Its fur is textured like a carpet and its mouth leaks waterfalls of slobber and drool. Its nails dig up the earth and kill all the grass. It smells the ground and each tree one by one loses its apples and vibrant colour. The grass turns to thorny sludge with each passing second. The bear slowly moves towards me, but arrives in seconds. Its breath reeks of rotting death. But the willow does not wither to the bear. The bear stoops down to my face and whispers in my ear,

“Master, what is your will? It shall be done.”

# Really, You Shouldn't Have

Liam Hayes

Really, you  
shouldn't have

died

hot

Mum

fought for

Destroying

inner voice

jailed over plot  
to

man

drown

Graduate

in Amazon rainforest

mining

frontman

drags

war

into winter

Shock departure

causes breathing issues

for

old

bag

educational charity

can

be really  
annoying'

staff say



# The Butcher of Baghdad

*Namo Siller-Aziz*

A man who once stood on top of a pyramid that represented the birthplace of human civilization.

A man who whenever you said his name you also had to praise by saying may God protect him, may God take our lives and give them to him.

A man who was worshipped like a god.

But beneath this image is a darker man.

A man who gas bombed an ethnic minority and then committed a genocide upon them.

A man who killed 80,000 people in one month because they rebelled and were not of the same Faith as him.

A man whose own mother saw him as a devil.

A man who consolidated Power by staging a show of killing people who were innocent of the crimes he said they were guilty of.

A man who stood up on top of that pyramid for twenty-four years.

A man who was eventually toppled by a foreign Force.

A man whose final execution was none other than his own.

The pyramid he stood upon had crumbled as that pyramid was built of the skulls of the people he had killed.

## 64 Squares Under Pressure

*Namo Siller-Aziz*

As I sat across from my opponent, I had started to feel the nerves creeping in. I was shaking as I realised the opportunity that was about to present itself to me.

If I won this game of skill, wit and determination I would become champion. I started to calculate all the possibilities in the position.

I was startled by the calmness of my opponent who sat just across from me. I knew that he was a better player than me, that he had nearly won this tournament before. The only player that had stopped him last time had since gone to college.

So he was the clear favourite; everything was set up for him to win it. But it was not to be. I got a good position out of the opening, capitalised on it and checkmated him.

As I stood up to go over to the scores table to confirm that I had won, an indescribable sense of relief washed over me.

## Proteus

*Namo Siller-Aziz*

This changing face is all we have of one of the most wanted people in the world. A man whose nickname is The Ninety-Nine Faces, for no one knows his real name.

This mystery surrounding him gives him the best security, for how do you catch someone that is many-faced.

He haunts the dreams of the police.

In their dreams of unmasking him, beneath that mask is a blank face.

Nobody knows his real name. This serves him well.

## Namo

*Namo Siller-Aziz*

I went to school in Austria in a place called Innsbruck.

The city became my new home after I left Cork at the age of four.

But I never quite got over being the new kid in school. I hated Innsbruck for school.

I'd see friends, hated the teachers who were soon pushing unrealistic expectations on a six-year-old me, and hated always being the last one finished with the homework. But in retrospect, the time in Austria gave me two things appropriate for life: football and the ability to resist, adapt and change in my own way.

Namo means stranger, which in my life I've very frequently been.

## The Clock

*Namo Siller-Aziz*

As a child my biggest fear came  
when I found out that one day I would die.

I suddenly became more cautious with everything I did,  
expecting it to change the outcome.

Now of course I know that everyone  
has a clock that's ticking above their head  
and is counting down to their Doomsday.

There is nothing that you can do to extend it,  
but you can make it shorter.

This clock is a reminder  
to take every opportunity you can, and enjoy it.

## A Sphere or a Globe

*Namo Siller-Aziz*

Liam is good at football

Football is a sport that is loved and watched by millions

Millions who play it like it's their last day on Earth

Earth that is covered in water

Water is the reason we call this the Blue Planet

The Blue Planet, one of David Attenborough's greatest masterpieces

A masterpiece that means many different things

to many different people

## Born Different

*Namo Siller-Aziz*

There is a pink elephant with blue spots standing in a cup shop.

This cup shop holds the most precious cups of all,  
including some from the Royal Family.

The Royal Family, a bunch of white people  
who sit in the palace where their lives gets paid for  
by the everyday people.

The everyday people who don't know  
how fantastically wealthy this family is;  
a family that has ruled over nearly all the world, including India.  
In India elephants are used as a sign of power.

# You Can't Fit Every Word into a Sonnet

*Namo Siller-Aziz*

Sport can unite, everyone knows that.

But why does sport have this power?

When a national hero like Kohli is at the bat,

a whole nation will hold its breath to see if he succeeds.

When these superhumans come off the field

they become normal everyday people and have to take a shower.

We worship them like gods.

Politicians would love to be as popular as a Beckham, that is guaranteed.

They make mistakes, they lose and they choke in the big moments.

But we all know that when our country wins it is the greatest moment.

The feeling of all being behind one team.

It's indescribable, because sport changes things.

Sport can stall wars, unite Nations and bring together people.

But Sport can divide opinions and take up our whole life.

So much so that the world potentially ending

feels irrelevant in comparison.

## Pfeifer-Huisele

*Namo Siller-Aziz*

Huisele was the boy who lived in the Alps. He was a boy who slept through class and when asked what shape the world was, he said it was flat. The pastor hated him because he was a good-for-nothing student. When the pastor screamed at him, Huisele would just yawn.

One summer while Huisele was once again avoiding the farmwork, his father found him and dragged him to the cow-dung hill. He dumped him on the floor and told him to spread out the pile of cow dung across the fields to fertilise them for crops. This horrible experience of actually having to do work haunted Huisele for the rest of his life. As soon as he was old enough he left.

But Huisele was kicked out of everywhere because he did nothing. When asked to wash the dishes he instead emptied the food store. Soon he could not even find anywhere to sleep. He had to retreat to the caves to find shelter.

One day in the middle of Winter he was struggling along and cursing the world, saying that he hated God for what he had done to him. Suddenly the Devil appeared and he offered Huisele a chance to gain incredible power including being able to shapeshift into other animals and the power to control the elements.

Over the next few years he caused havoc among the villages. Using his name became a curse, as he always seemed to show up when you mentioned him. There were many attempts to catch him but he was always able to disappear and escape from the most impossible situations.

The Devil had put one condition upon Huisele: that he could never pray to God, and if he did then the Devil would remove Huisele's powers. After many more years of causing chaos in the valleys, Huisele was once again in the cave where he had made his fateful decision to give his soul to the Devil. He reflected on what he had spent his life's work on and felt remorse and just for a second he

put his hands together and prayed to God.

Suddenly a flame erupted behind him and the Devil appeared, looking furious. He took away all of Huisele's powers and told him that he would never be able to rest. He was not, however, able to take Huisele's soul, as it still inhabited a living body.

But it didn't take very long for Huisele to get caught by the villagers. They dragged him into the centre of the marketplace and threw him into a drum of boiling oil. Huisele could not escape this one.

Huisele arrived in Hell where the delighted face of the Devil met him. Huisele tried to reason, but the Devil sent him to his lesser devils who played catch with him. As he was thrown from one mountain to another he would break every bone in this body. But as soon as a devil picked him up, all his bones were set again. And so Huisele was condemned to face immortal pain.

## A Truth Beyond Denying

*Namo Siller-Aziz*

Why do solar eclipses happen? Once upon a time there were two suns, but it was just too hot. Nothing could grow and there was no night. The two suns were the eyes of an eagle. With its beady gaze it scanned the world. The League of Gods had to find a solution, so they sent the God of War, who was a cat. He rode his chariot pulled by mice. He landed on the Eagle's beak, which were the stars. Cat then proceeded to scratch one of the Eagle's eyes, so that now there was only one sun and one blind moon. So when a solar eclipse happens it's just the eagle going cross-eyed.

## Shrankempkurf

*Ben Ó Muiri*

Shrankempkurf, no idea what it means but I wanted  
a German-sounding word .

Why did I want a German-sounding word?

Words are complex, words are fluid, existing to help us formulate  
and spread thoughts and ideas.

Why do we want to spread ideas?

Because we think we, in some instances, are better than our fellow men.

Why do we think this? Is it an inherent part of homo sapien philosophy?

Perhaps, perhaps not.

Are homo sapiens really a single species?

After all, I am so radically different in some ways to anybody else.

## My Duplo Hotel

*Ben Ó Muiri*

My Duplo hotel,

The finest of the fine,

An rud is fearr sa domhan

My Duplo hotel had a number of issues though

Fire, earthquakes, tsunamis, even meteors

But one thing they could never break

The power of a boy's imagination



## Gown of Red

*Ben Ó Muirí*

He was eating a red painted dress.  
Everyone else in the store was looking at him,  
no matter how hard they tried, they couldn't understand.

Why on earth would a man eat a dress? Coated in red paint no less?  
And why did he pick a red dress out of all the dresses in said store?  
It's almost like with bulls, although apparently they are colourblind.  
Perhaps this man too was colourblind,  
perhaps he ate dresses on a texture-only basis.

## Ag moladh na Gaeil

*Ben Ó Muirí*

To the Irish language  
You are everything to me  
Mo deora, m'fhuil  
An farraige is spéir  
An grian agus gealach,  
My umbrella, my balloon

The pain it brings, to address you in the Saxon tongue,  
Accepted by my people as ár teanga féin

Mise le meas, Ben Ó Muirí

## Dán molta do Dubhglas De Híde

*Ben Ó Muiri*

Dán faoi An Craoibhín Aoibhinn nó Dubhglas de Híde,  
of your title you are, an t-Uachtarán, céad uachtarán den Conradh na Gaeilge.  
Founder of the modern Irish nation.  
Cruthatheoir den smaoinreamh náisiúnta.  
Dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

## Is Éireannach mé:

*Ben Ó Muiri*

Being Irish, náisiúntacht Éireannaigh  
What does it mean to call yourself a man of the green?  
To walk the great fields of Hibernia bright and clean.  
Mar is daoine Gaelaigh sinn, gan náire gan dabht.  
And when people refuse to recognize this, all hell can break loose.  
For what is a country without a culture? A teanga gan tír.  
A people content with comforts of new that they disappear  
Amach as an Ghaeltacht agus isteach an Ghalltacht  
Mar dúirt ár n-athair náisiúnach, tír gan teanga tír gan anam.

## Cara Nua

*Ben Ó Muiri*

Yesterday, I met a new friend, cara nua.  
Aon teanga ba mhaith leat a úsaid.  
Anyways, like she was a fellow dalta na teanga Gaelach,  
student of the Gaelic language.  
Agus bhí a Ghaelainn níos fearr ná mé féin!  
Tá súil agam go mbeadh na torthaí den comhrá le chéile!

## Along the Jordan Valley

*Ben Ó Muiri*

I walked along the desert path: bombs, bullets, Hell from the sky  
And I thought to myself, a mournful thought, in this sacred land of old,  
For from the river to the sea, children dying, maidens in tears  
I thought a thought, utterly mournful, along the Jordan Valley.

Such a holy land, tainted by sin, the sin of the Zionist  
Why must I be a crime of existence, merely refusing to die?  
And yet, I turn to God above, the God of the Jews too  
For my liberty and mercy.  
For those who did me wrong.

# Letter From an Unknown Woman

*Ben Ó Muiri*

Letter from an  
Unknown Woman

Everyone's talking about ...

*Barbie back in the toybox*

Promising  
the moon

not to walk out,  
but to stay in  
order to boo

Bats

the King's a

bloodbath

MINDBENDER

**This will end in tears**

the incongruities of life

Italian priest  
removed for  
calling Francis  
an 'anti-pope'

He was  
the size of  
a burger  
and had  
terrifying  
eyebrows

Wit h

*Big pants*

## Putin

*Bart Cierniak*

A round and petulant face  
had arrived in my peripheral.  
He was oozing with delusional confidence,  
while marching through my town.  
While stomping,  
the centuries-old roads cracked under pressure.  
The town crumbled,  
but the hideous character kept on walking  
and never looked back.

## The Abyss

*Bart Cierniak*

white noise      dark matter

white noise      dark matter

white noise      dark matter

white noise      dark matter

white noise      dark matter

white noise      dark matter

Where am I?      What am I?

white noise?      dark matter?

## Cardiac Arrest

*Bart Cierniak*

I'm an old man  
listening to the whispers of the wind

then a man ran  
ran through the whispers of the wind  
and suddenly I fell

Why would you fall if you could stand?  
Why would you die if you could live?  
Why would you stop if you could go?  
Why would you do nothing?

You can't do everything,  
but it's never too late to do something  
Wasted time cannot be brought back

## Closed

*Eoin Bowdren*

My 9th birthday in Supernova was fire.  
All my friends were there,  
My family was there,  
I had a Lego Chewbacca birthday cake that was lovely.  
That birthday was great.  
Didn't talk to that friend group much afterward though;  
two of them were entering secondary school.

But other than that,  
it was great:  
8 out of 10.

Supernova is closed now.  
Unfortunately,  
I haven't talked to any of my friends from that party since 2019.

## Sonnet agus Bonnet

*Eoin Bowdren*

His ambitions were never great  
Although there was always something to look forward to.  
Whenever he got home, he would open and stare into the fridge,  
and the fridge would stare back, as if to question his laziness.

He is twenty-two and unemployed, a problem he can't seem to fix,  
the steaks his mom used to buy won't just appear anymore.

Nor will the milk  
Or the cheese,  
But still his passion is unwavering.

He grabs what's left in the fridge,  
He fumbles his way to the Birds Eye chicken fillet.  
He throws the chicken, oil and some butter in the pan.  
He smiles to himself, a light in the kitchen. He says,  
*It's not much, but it will do.*

# Toys in Mind

*Eoin Bowdren*

Toys can serve many different purposes  
They serve as a great creative outlet for kids,  
an outlet that is only limited by one's knowledge and imagination.

And with age, our knowledge continues to expand.  
If someone were to give me my Lego from years ago,  
I could picture some in a climactic duel,  
some running a business, some reenacting scenes  
from my favourite movies and TV shows.

The possibilities are truly endless.

# Lost Boy

*Eoin Bowdren*

He was there  
He was one of our group  
We are still good friends  
But he doesn't make an effort

Not like the rest of us  
Even those who don't call  
Or talk to others  
At least  
They try



They go to school  
To birthdays  
To trips  
But he doesn't

Talk to him once in a blue moon  
He stays inside  
I don't know when I'll see him again

## Given Us This Day

*Eoin Bowdren*

Bread is pretty nice  
In all of its many forms  
Have it with egg in the morning  
Have some with chicken in a sandwich for lunch  
Pastries are nice too  
But I don't have much of a sweet tooth  
Even just a slice on its own is nice  
Slice of white bread  
Brown bread makes me sad  
It tastes horrible  
At night I wake up in a cold sweat  
Thinking  
*Who on earth thought brown bread*  
*Was a good idea?*  
It has the texture of normal bread  
But tastes like sand  
Wet sand  
It's horrible

## Dark

*Ben Callanan*

I was scared of the dark as a child, just like many others.  
My door had to be open at night, so I wasn't in complete darkness.  
Gradually I let my door close more and more every year  
as my fear of the darkness subsided.

But the worst was the dark in my parents' room,  
and what I thought was inside.  
I had to walk down a corridor in the dark,  
and the light switch was in the room, in the dark.

I was terrified that something was lurking, hiding in there.  
I remember I used to make sure I would stomp my feet  
as I walked up, to make sure I would scare away  
the scary monsters that hid in the dark.

## Stained Glass

*Ben Callanan*

The stained glass shines down through the church.  
The colours come alive with the light,  
and the pews are a kaleidoscope of colour.

The mythical people encased in this glass mean nothing anymore -  
but the light, the glass, the colours! They mean everything.  
The stark black edges on the glass stand out  
like light amongst the bright colours.

Standing beneath these works of art,  
you forget where you are, and what things are shown in this glass.  
You only feel the glass's beauty, and its light.

## Alive

*Ben Callanan*

You are just a faint memory to me, a face in old pictures,  
a man I don't remember speaking to.  
And yet every time I speak with my father,  
I'm always speaking to you, somehow:

your words, your phrases, your humour.  
I've heard so many of your quotes from my father,  
and my aunts and uncles. You live on  
through everything they say, every story that they tell about you.

Your children keep you alive in that way,  
by remembering your words.  
I don't remember meeting you or speaking to you.  
I was young when you died. But somehow, I still feel like I know you.  
My dad has made sure that I don't forget my grandfather, his father.  
And now I don't think I ever will.

## Life

*Ben Callanan*

He stands on a duck in a shop  
A shop selling all you've ever wanted  
I wanted to be able to think less  
Less and less stress would be great  
Great like the wonders of the world  
Our world, so beautiful yet so broken  
Broken like the glass case on the floor  
A floor so cold it seeps into your bones  
Your bones so fragile and delicate  
Delicate like life itself

## Become

*Ben Callanan*

My box of animals, they are like no other. They have a secret only I know about. When I play with these animals, I am transported to their world, into their bodies. I can feel myself fly higher, higher, higher, until I touch the ceiling of my room, the edge of the sky. Suddenly I'm a horse, galloping through the long stretch of grass that is my rug. I soar through this grass, never feeling more alive. I stand on the cliff of my desk as the world's largest elephant. I stretch my neck up to the leaves of my hanging-down clothes. I dive to the depth of the ocean that is my bathtub. I do this and so much more. I become bird, dragon, whale, dinosaur, horse, elephant, fish, sheep, dog, lion, tiger, bear. When using these animals, I don't just play with them. I become them.

## Worm

*Ben Callanan*

On the street, outside the shop,  
I wait for you to come.  
Where has the time gone?  
Where have we gone?  
When we met, you said  
“I’m an early bird.”  
And here I stand, waiting  
for you like the worm  
waits for that early bird.  
I know what will happen soon,  
or I think I do.  
But the worm just thinks  
it’s any other day, doesn’t he?  
He knows nothing of how soon his  
day will end, and how his heart will break.  
If you want to be alone,  
you could just tell me.  
Give me that mercy, please, please,  
please give me that mercy.  
But this is how it must be, I guess,  
You’re the early bird and I’m your worm.  
Just please give me mercy and make it quick.  
Please, please, please, give me that mercy.

## Forever

*Ben Callanan*

I don't talk to my childhood best friend anymore.

My sister moved across the world;

we haven't shared a room in years.

Our old room is gone, it lies with the ashes of our mother,  
and our childhood home.

I've split up from my partner.

They're remarried to someone else.

My favourite restaurant closed down

And my childhood crush passed away.

I'm not an astronaut, or a fireman,

or anything else I once dreamed of.

I've forgotten how to play the piano,

My teddy bear was thrown out years ago.

My old school shut down,

And they don't teach kids the things they taught us.

I can't revisit my childhood. Ever.

But I remember it.

## Who Remains

*Ben Callanan*

I am the one who remains of my kind, the only one.

I used to take up many forms, spread across the galaxy,  
one for every world where people believed in me. Now,

however, I have only one form, and I hide on the moon that orbits the only world left. They killed all of the other life forms that believed in me. These humans colonised the galaxy, killed all in their way, and now they are all alone.

I am a goddess. There was once too many of us gods and goddesses to count, but now I am all that is left. She Who Remains. The humans stopped believing in the other gods, stopped observing the rituals. But I am alive. I am the Goddess of Greed, and the humans have kept me alive for millennia. They do not know I exist. If they did, they would try to expunge me. They don't believe in me, but their every single act of greed keeps me alive. And those humans never stop being greedy.

## Crumbles, Crumbles

*Ben Callanan*

The mouse said "my favourite food is Gruffalo crumble!"  
A crumble that slowly wears away a building's roof  
A roof that protects you from the world's harsh reality  
A reality which you must now face  
A face emerging from the darkness  
Darkness that looms around every corner  
A corner of a dark street in a faraway city  
A city at nighttime, with lights in its buildings  
A building that slowly crumbles.

One-Way Ticket

Ben Callanan

**One-way ticket**

**woman**

**of**

**HONEYCOMB**

**jabs the King in the back**,

**with her**

pushing boy

**becoming a  
white elephant**

**An endless cycle of here  
today, gone tomorrow**



## The Eighth Sin

*Dylan O'Callaghan*

Gluttony, lust, sloth, envy, wrath, greed and pride  
All of these are on my side (sin, sin, sin, sin)  
Falling down the endless void  
Feeling sooooo annoyed  
Can't stop these feelings from taking over  
Wishing I was still sober (seven sins, seven sins, seven sins)  
I need more power  
Something for me to devour  
This feeling is so strange  
Feeling weak, feeling deranged  
This must be an eighth sin  
I feel as though...

## To Bed with a Wet Head

*Dylan O'Callaghan*

If you go to bed with wet hair, you'll wake up blind  
As blind as a bat  
A bat like the one that flies in the night sky  
A sky so dark that it needs the moon for light  
Light that helps us see in the night  
The night that soon is banished by the sun  
The sun that tells us when the morning has come

## Collective

*Dylan O'Callaghan*

The Collective controls what is said  
They are told what to do  
The rebellious will turn up dead  
Never knowing what is wrong or true  
The lives of the strong over the weak  
The predators will defeat the prey  
The dominant slay the meek

## Eyes

*Dylan O'Callaghan*

Every night when I close my eyes  
I can see it staring right back at me.  
Our eyes locked like a cage;  
the only thing to make out in the darkness  
are those eyes.

They tell me a story of both love and hate.  
I don't know should I feel sorrow or fear

for this nightmare of falling asleep  
to someone watching me, waiting for me.

It doesn't end till the sun reappears  
to banish the moon.  
But it doesn't end,  
it only waits to start again.

## Shaq

*Dylan O'Callaghan*

Tough as steel, as big as a house  
Other players next to him looked like a mouse  
He could dunk he could dribble  
When he ate the hot food he'd take a nibble  
He jumped so high  
He could touch the sky  
He would break the hoop  
He'd run in a loop  
His games were won  
So when he was done  
Into entertainment he would run  
Where he gave us all a laugh  
And as always he was as calm as a calf

## Ballet for a Toaster

*Dylan O'Callaghan*

Take out the pillowy soft-cruised paper-like angelic objects  
from the pan  
Place them down into the four fiery entrances to Hell  
Push down the button to open the crimson gates  
Dropping the pillows inside  
Leave them burn in that hot space for a few minutes  
Till you pull them out, emerging as new creatures  
which have been moulded by the burning abyss  
Only for you to place them on a plate  
to devour both their body and soul

## The Fall

*Dylan O'Callaghan*

The world stopped for me in that moment  
made me feel like I had been dropped into ice cold water  
But at the same time plunged into red hot fire  
This moment was one of pain and suffering  
This moment was like falling down to Hell  
and then ascending to heaven at the same time  
The fall made me feel helpless  
The fall made me feel hopeless  
I fell as Lucifer fell from Heaven in a ball of molten flame  
This fall was like nothing I had felt before  
But as I arose I was cut, filleted like a fish,  
butchered like a pig, all of the above and more  
This fall hurt as my whole body was so very sore

## Stolen Time

*Dylan O'Callaghan*

He took the watch  
My time is gone  
It just feels so wrong  
  
I used to wear it everywhere  
In the park, in the car, and even in my hair  
This watch was my favourite thing  
It helped me run, to count, and even sing

My watch is now gone onto another's hand  
I sit here thinking of that watch  
which makes it hard to stand

My time is now lost  
I must get it back at all cost

## Moments

*Kieran Lane Panab*

Tick Tock, Tick Tock  
One two three  
The teacher picked up the chalk  
Please let me be free

Clip Clop, Clip Clop  
The sound of pain  
The approaching cop

Tip Tap, Tip Tap  
The annoyance of a kid  
Listening to rap  
Waiting to pair his box with a lid

Hip Hop, Hip Hop  
The end of the flock  
The Final tock of the clock

## It

*Kieran Lane Panab*

It never moves

It is always there

It is too loud

It is a reminder it's never missing

It is not always free

It is a worthwhile investment

It can make you lonely

It can connect you with others

It is a distraction

It is a welcome distraction

It is old and problematic

It is perfect for me

It might break down soon

It will have given happy memories

## Door

*Kieran Lane Panab*

A man was being beaten up by a door

A door which only believed in violence

Violence which generations of doors passed down

Down to our door

The door that beats up a man, purely for the thrill

The thrill of violence

The violence which makes everyone hate peace

The peace that is then forever forgotten

## My Lorry

*Kieran Lane Panah*

The Lorry that helped me uncover all the mysteries.

The Lorry that brought me deeper than Earth's core and farther than the sun.

The Lorry that could drive, fly and swim as well as a thousand other things.

The Lorry that started civilizations.

The Lorry that brought me to the end of time and back.

The Lorry that advertised my name, advertised my greatness and my knowledge.

The Lorry in which everything that could happen did happen.

The Lorry that gave me everything.

My Lorry.

## Protocols

*Kieran Lane Panah*

When you leave, make it so that it stays happy,

It may enter your dreams if you do not.

When you see it, ensure that it is always clean,

It may infect you with bugs if it's not.

When you enter it, do so gently with no sudden movements,

It may become startled causing it to become uncomfortable.

When it becomes too hot, open a window,

It may boil you alive if you do not.

When you're in it, relax as much as you can,

It may be able to sense your unease.

When you awaken, ensure that you do so on the right side,

Or else it may be a case of getting out on the wrong side.

## End of Sleep

*Kieran Lane Panah*

*Erasure from The Legend of Sleepy Hollow by Washington Irving*

the great tree	the unfortunate
the dark glen	
the snow	the chief
the favourite	the headless horseman
the graves	the shades of
the Hudson	the sunbeams
the bridge	the daytime

## Ann Chovi

*Kieran Lane Panah*

After three weeks of my care,  
 Ann Chovi did not want to eat,  
   or swim,  
   or live.

So Ann Chovi did not eat,  
   or swim,  
   or live.

After a few days Ann Chovi died,  
 A silent death, upside down in a fishbowl.  
 Then took its final journey  
 Down the Toilet.



## Fear of Roofs

*Kieran Lane Panab*

As a child I was always terrified of the roof collapsing onto me as I slept.  
Every night I would cover myself with teddys  
Wrap myself in a blanket  
And hope that tonight was not the night that the roof collapsed.  
After months of this fear I finally accepted that it would never happen.

This fear returned though after I watched a documentary.  
The documentary of roofs collapsing during earthquakes.  
The documentary which prompted the fear to return.  
The fear did return and has never fully left.

## Olive the Giraffe

*Sam Hodgins*

Olive was a special toy  
She went everywhere with me  
I always hoped we'd travel the world someday  
When I was angry, I wish we could've escaped together  
She kept me safe during the night  
She looked under my bed for monsters  
She kept me cozy when I was sad  
She cared for me and I cared for her  
When she ran away, I always spotted her polygons  
Olive gave me everything

# Troop

*Sam Hodgins*

My neckerchief helps me keep peace  
It helps me show people who I am  
It tells me what I'm fighting for each week  
When I wear it, I'm representing my group  
My neckerchief gives me meaning  
It can take many colours and each one is special to me  
When I wear it, I know my friends will be there  
It shows me I'm part of a community across the world  
My neckerchief gives me meaning

# Granny

*Sam Hodgins*

She cared for me each day  
No matter what she was doing  
  
Her friends knew all about me  
Saying *bi* to us on our way to school  
  
Teaching me how to play snap  
She was the Queen of snap  
  
Watching The Chase reminds me of her  
The Sunday dinner was her special  
  
I remember her each day and forever more

# Mountains

*Sam Hodgins*

The mountains are my happy place  
I lace up my boots and off I go  
No matter where I go, I feel at home  
My home away from home  
The feeling of joy as I reach the top  
Smelling the countryside, the smell of animals  
Exploring different mountains  
Each one holding a different mystery

One community united as one, no one is left behind  
Crossing rivers with my friends  
Finding out which bend to take next  
Taking on new challenges in scary places  
Witnessing magical creatures  
The mountains are my home away from home

## Two Zoogenic Disasters

*Sam Hodgins*

Rocks are rolling down a hill  
A girl is running up a road  
The road is filled with lizards  
The lizards are crawling up a building  
The building is crumbling  
The crumbling of biscuits as they are broken up

Penguins wobble and slide around on their bellies  
An elephant's belly is quite floppy  
A big dog is flopping around the park  
The park is full of turtles  
A turtle's shell is stronger than a tank  
A tank was destroyed by an elephant  
An elephant is walking around the shop

## My Father

*Cathal Twomey*

My father is a humble man.  
He goes to work and comes home.  
Comes home to his family he loves so dearly  
I sincerely hope he is never on his own.

He listens to all willing to talk  
He gives and wishes for nothing in return.  
He is wise during our walks  
And he never thinks too much of his own.

## The Warning

*Cathal Twomey*

When the stick strolled down the ditch it saw a corpse.  
A corpse rotten and full of flesh-eating maggots.  
Maggots feeding to grow and become flies.  
Flies who attract the most horrible forms of disgust.  
The disgust felt by millions on a daily basis towards ourselves.  
Ourselves who torture and destroy our world.  
Our world, beautiful and tainted by sickness.  
The sickness of greed and lust consuming all.

## In Childhood We Create the Gods

*Cathal Twomey*

When I was young I created whole worlds  
Characters with conflicts  
Gods of light and dark  
Mortals of strength and weakness

Their world was in a shambles, a land called  
The Wastes  
There existed a man to change it all  
One who wielded control over water

This man sought others like him  
To restore balance to light and dark  
Guided by the orb of light  
Tempted by the demonic hand

## A Morning Alarm

*Cathal Twomey*

I've noticed something strange. A vague thing, really.  
You'd have to squint to notice it, but my toaster has gained life.

Every morning at exactly 8:01 am  
I wake up to the sound of toast popping. I go downstairs,  
and there's nothing.

The toaster has eaten my damn bread!

I know this for a fact. I've set up security cameras  
and watched my toaster toddle away into my cupboard,  
toast my bread, and eat it.

I'm at a severe loss of bread.  
Bread bankrupt.  
From a damn toaster.

## Repulsion, Attraction

*Cathal Twomey*

Bland chunks of oats  
Separated by milk  
Brought together by honey  
Sweet, sweet honey.

We are brought together  
By what we seek  
And torn apart  
By what we dislike.

Pointless arguments, groups in pursuit  
Pursuit of proving their beliefs  
Beliefs that hold little purpose  
In the face of greater problems.

The earth we stand on is crumbling  
The honey we sought has disappeared  
And nothing is left to stick us together  
Pointless hatred is all that remains.

## After the Egg

*Cathal Twomey*

The egg was flabbergasted at the old man's new boots.  
The new boots shone and burned all the eyes who gazed upon them.  
Upon them was a small frog slimier than a snotty toddler.  
A snotty toddler who spent his time caking people in grease.  
Grease thicker than the tension between opposing politicians.  
Politicians who were so disconnected from the world  
that they might as well have been in space.  
A space so vast and beautiful, yet almost completely devoid of objects.  
Objects that could make even the worst salesman feel like a true entrepreneur.

# The Cycle

*Cathal Twomey*

Everything is a flow  
Like waves in an infinite ocean  
Voices murmur the secrets of reality  
And bodies take form in the sea.

Everything does as it needs  
Will cannot be controlled  
Towering titans cover the scape  
These giant creatures of old.

The child laughs with glee  
The bridges have now been formed  
Our tales of old are coming true  
And the cycle comes to an end.

The flow wills to return,  
Come back to what it was  
Who are you to stop it?  
The one who is our cause.



## And Finally

*Cathal Twomey*

Black clouds, grey skies  
Fighting up this bloodstained landslide  
White stone, no home  
Mercenaries battle their last fight

Satan need not take you  
God shall not forgive you  
The battleground  
Is your new home

Azrael waits to take you  
Apollyon's void awaits you  
The battleground  
Is your new home

## The Rainbow's Alter Ego

*Gaius Kettunen*

The elegant butterfly, arching through the sky,  
Bright colours frame its maiden flight.  
Yesterday, I saw one close to me,  
But as I reached out, it turned and fled.  
Bye bye, little butterfly, may you always be free.

# The Spheres

*Gaius Kettunen*

The planets, like water sloshing,  
Spinning down towards the drain.  
Small droplets, the comets whooshing,  
Towards the largest, all will rain.

But on a much grander scale,  
The stars that seem small  
Never seem to fail  
To have the strongest pull of all.

The energy used must yet return,  
From the galaxies spread on the stem of space  
Like the thin leaves of an outstretched fern,  
The Big Bang first set the pace.

Energy, God-given, from Heaven sent,  
Entropy must collect, to begin the end.

# Destination

*Gaius Kettunen*

I often gazed in wonder at the stars.  
I pondered how it would feel to touch one.  
I never guessed I would travel this far,  
Further than man could ever come.

I watched as the stars turned to lines in my vision,  
Like water droplets on a window pane.  
As I accelerated, space around me seemed to whirl,  
Granting me with newfound beauty.

I went so fast that light could no longer reach me.  
I drifted along to my final destination, free from the burden of sight,  
A place where I could escape to,  
A place with no beginning, middle or end.

## Why is Water the Essence of Life?

*Gaius Kettunen*

Long ago, in a time gone by,  
The first stars made the first elements.  
After a while, the stars became bored,  
Of making more complex shapes and spaces,  
So they came up with a new idea;  
*“The Variance of Life”*

And so, using two of their most plentiful resources  
They created H<sub>2</sub>O.  
This liquid was sent in all directions  
To start the show.  
Eventually, after the stars lost track of time itself,  
Water landed on a planet called Earth.  
Kickstarting the cycle  
Of life.

# Littler Dreams

*Gaius Kettunen*

**Littler dreams**

first woman

**pleads guilty  
to facilitating**

Biological brain changes

Look after your body

Even in the  
darkest places

Post Office says

'Pure joy'

is your

prison hell

## Gazelle

*Gaius Kettunen*

I glide over the veldt with grace,  
Bounding in a boundless grassland.  
My feet in pairs, swimming through a solid ocean.  
I stop to drink.  
Fuel for my everlasting journey.  
Where predators give chase,  
I must create haste.  
In a world of danger, I have no fear.  
I continue to stride  
As long as I am alive.

## Remember the Future

*Gaius Kettunen*

The wizard imparted his wisdom.  
Wisdom from the ages gone by.  
The ages of innovation and shamans.  
The shamans that summoned rain.  
The rain that grew plants.  
The plants that allowed life to continue.  
Life, that was pure like a child.  
Until the child lost its innocence.  
The innocence that could have saved our world.  
The world that lay in waste.  
The waste that we left behind after our frivolous lives.

## Man of Magma

*Gaius Kettunen*

As creatures tread on uneven ground,  
A tiny vibration is sent through the soil.  
To a wrinkly ear, goes this sound,  
The man of magma hears their toil.

The land moves and separates,  
Crust bends to the man's will.  
For until the creatures meet their fates,  
The man of magma shan't be still.

Tremors shoot through the crust,  
As the man of magma pounds his fist.  
Continuing to send land to where it must  
Crumble apart, like a growing cyst;

For as long as the man is condemned,  
It is our planet he is forced to mend.

So

*Gaius Kettunen*

So, tell me what you need  
Say the word and I'll grovel on my knees  
I'm trapped in this battle by my feet  
Is this the end, will I ever be free?

Tryna clear my head, but the clouds are there still  
Got an endless void that I'm still tryna fill  
Have to call for help, but my voice is getting shrill  
Feels like I'm pushing boulders up the hill

## Life

*Matthew O'Mahony*

Lying on your deathbed gasping for a breath,  
Spluttering your final words on the planet,  
Reflecting on your life before your death,  
Thinking about your vast amount of talent.

Saying to yourself, *Why did I hesitate?*  
*Why did I not have the belief needed?*  
Thinking about *how much I hate.*  
Thinking back saying, *why did I not succeed.*

*I was better than I ever thought I was,*  
*The potential that naive younger me had.*  
Regretting ignoring the dreams that you had:  
*I did not fulfil the promise I told my dad.*

Life is a very rare and gracious opportunity,  
Do not miss out on the opportunity.

## On Top of a Tree

*Matthew O'Mahony*

Climbing on top of a tree, feeling on top of the world.  
Looking down on the world, happily laughing.  
Laughing at the people who bullied him.  
They laughed at him for his peculiar personality.  
However, it was their personalities that were odd.  
Odd because of the lack of creativity.  
They couldn't create any thoughts that made them happy.  
As happy as a child's first day at the park.  
Playing at the park with all of his friends.  
Friends who could not understand why he was laughing.

## Rage

*Matthew O'Mahony*

I smashed the ball against the wall in anger,  
imagining winning the Champions League.  
A league with competitors that would die to win.  
The winning feeling like the last day of school.  
The school that makes everyone depressed.  
As depressed as a sloth in the zoo.  
Like a zoo, the room was filled from back to front.  
The soldier moved to the front of the line  
not even thinking about the risks.  
He risked his career by exposing the truth.  
They say you must always trust your heart.  
Your heart is always right.



## Age

*Matthew O'Mahony*

He battles the creature of the night.  
He is not afraid of any fight.  
Just like an ancient knight.  
Restoring the city with all of its light.  
Built like some sort of stick man.  
But in all truth he is *the man*.  
The man with all the talent.  
But the ability of a tent.  
Covering the whole of the field.  
But yet he cannot yield.  
For any of his years.





# The Unfinished Book of Poetry 2024

featuring poems by



Abbie Foley  
Alisha Zafar  
Amy O'Sullivan  
Aoibhe Sheehan  
Ava Cahill  
Cassandra Fitzgerald  
Ellie Patterson  
Khawar Bilal  
Clodagh Morrison  
Leona Waugh  
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Caragh Ní Loingsigh  
Seán Ó Conaill  
Rose Ní Shúilleabháin  
Laura Ní Ghiollabháin  
Josh De Búrca  
Caoimhe Ní Loingsigh  
Naoise Ní Shúilleabháin  
Tara Ní Chúipéir  
Cara Ní Shúilleabháin  
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Kieran Lane Panah  
Sam Hodgins  
Cathal Twomey  
Gaius Kettunen  
Matthew O'Mahony



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