

The Unfinished Book of Poetry 2026

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

Published in 2026 by Ó Bhéal,
Cork City Council, Cork City Libraries and Schools Project



**LIBRARIES
LEABHARLANNA**

CORK CITY COUNCIL | COMHAIRLE CATHRACH CHORCAÍ

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Cover photograph by Brendan Duffin, featuring roller-skater Ellie-Doris Fogarty

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The Unfinished Book of Poetry 2026



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Foreword

And here we welcome the 22nd edition of this ever-bounteous and delightful compilation, one which surprises us unfailingly. *The Unfinished Book of Poetry* continues to offer space to our next generation of writers, rendered here in 120 pages of thoughtfully woven verse, covering an impressive range of subjects. It is also published as an eBook, and is easily searchable online.

The 2026 edition features poems from 31 young writers, in transition year at five Cork city schools. Since the debut edition was published in 2005, the year Cork city was the European Capital of Culture, over thirty schools have taken part in the project, most on multiple occasions.

The consistent quality of poems is in large part thanks to the diligent eyes of our five professional assisting writers. Their creative guidance in helping each student develop their own modes of individual expression, vis-à-vis exploring a broad variety of examples and genres from the universe of poetry, is highly informative and valuable for the development of these young writers.

Congratulations to all of the newly published poets, from:

- Le Chéile Secondary School, Ballincollig with poet Molly Twomey in Ballincollig library;
- Presentation Secondary School, led by poet Niamh Prior in Tory Top Library and at the school;
- Bishopstown Community School with poet Matthew Geden in Bishopstown Library;
- Gaelcholáiste Mhuire Ag le file Dairena Ní Chinnéide, í Leabharlann na Linne Duibhe; agus
- Mayfield Community School led by poet Lani O'Hanlon in Mayfield Library and at the school.

With special thanks to the T.Y. co-ordinators and Cork city library staff.

Enjoy!

Paul Casey
Project Curator, April 2026

Assisting Writers' Biographies

Molly Twomey

Molly Twomey grew up in Lismore, County Waterford, and now lives in Cork. She published two poetry collections with the Gallery Press: *Raised Among Vultures* (2022) and *Chic to be Sad* (2025), supported by literature bursaries from the Arts Council. Her debut collection won the Southword Debut Collection Poetry Award and was shortlisted for the Seamus Heaney Poetry Prize for Best First Collection. She holds an MA in Creative Writing and is a PhD Excellence Scholar at University College Cork.

Niamh Prior

Niamh Prior discovered a love for teaching creative writing when she began facilitating workshops for teenagers around her kitchen table in 2007. She continued to do so every Saturday morning for six years until she enrolled in the MA in Creative Writing at UCC. For her thesis she specialised in poetry. She enjoyed the Masters so much that she went on to do a PhD for which she focused on writing fiction. Her doctoral studies were funded by scholarships from UCC and from the Irish Research Council. She has taught creative writing on the English degree programme at UCC. Her debut book of fiction, *Catchlights*, published by John Murray Originals, was shortlisted for the John McGahern Book Prize. Her poetry appears in publications including the *Stinging Fly*, *Southword*, *The North*, and *The London Magazine*. And she still loves running creative writing workshops for teenagers.

Assisting Writers' Biographies

Matthew Geden

Matthew Geden was born and brought up in the English Midlands moving to Kinsale in 1990. He is a poet, translator and Creative Writing facilitator. His most recent collections are *The Cloud Architect* (Doire Press, 2022) and *Ocean of Earth: Selected Poems of Guillaume Apollinaire* (SurVision Books, 2024). In 2019 he was Writer in Residence at Nanjing Literature Centre in China and he was Writer in Residence for Cork County Library and Arts Service from 2020 to 2023.

Dairena Ní Chinnéide

File sa dá theanga í Dairena Ní Chinnéide. I measc 12 gcnuasach foilsithe aici tá *Teacht Aniar Meascra Dánta 2004-2024* (Éabhlóid 2024), *Tairseach* (Éabhlóid 2022), *Fé Gheasa: Spellbound* (Arlen House 2016), *Cloithear Aistear Anama* (Coiscéim 2013) agus *An Trodaí & Dánta Eile / The Warrior & Other Poems* (Cló Iar Chonnacht 2006).

Dairena Ní Chinnéide is a bilingual poet. The most recent of her 12 published collections is *Teacht Aniar Meascra Dánta 2004-2024* (Éabhlóid 2024), and *Tairseach* (Éabhlóid, 2022). *deleted*, by Salmon Poetry (2019) is her debut collection in English. She is an interpreter, former television producer and journalist. www.dairenanichinneide.com

Assisting Writers' Biographies

Lani O'Hanlon

Lani O'Hanlon is a writer, poet, dance/voice artist and experienced creative writing teacher with an MA from Lancaster University, she also works as a poet in palliative care and in the area of mental health and well-being, with Réalta and Waterford Healing Arts. Lani was grateful to receive the Gregory O'Donoghue Poetry Award (2025) and for this poem to be nominated by Southword for the Forward Prize (2026). She has also received the Poetry Ireland/Trocaire Award (2022) and, with director Fiona Aryan, the Bloomsday Award for Best Irish Poetry Film (2024) and the Ó Bhéal International Poetry Film Award (2019). Other prizes include Dromineer, Bridport and Poetry on the Lake, and a shortlisting for the Hennessy Literary Award / Emerging Fiction. Lani is the grateful recipient of bursaries, mentorships and awards from the National Arts Council of Ireland, Waterford County Council and The Munster Literature Centre.

Her collection *Landscape of the Body* (Dedalus Press, 2023) has been widely praised, and her work appears in journals including *Channel*, *Hive*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Poetry* (Chicago), *Portland Review*, *Southword*, *The Irish Times*, is regularly broadcast on RTÉ's Sunday Miscellany, and featured in numerous anthologies. She is currently completing a co-created poetry collection, *About Grief – Songs of Love*.

Le Chéile Secondary School

Poetry by

Amélie Thomas

Alex O'Sullivan

Max Day

David Deasy Rubio

Grace Fitton

Falak Hidaya

Yaz Bouketta

Nina Kershaw

Elsie O'Regan

Assisting Writer: Molly Twomey

T.Y. Coordinator: Cillian Brennan

Workshops held at Ballincollig Library

Assisting Librarian: Mary Corcoran



It was a privilege to spend time with the transition year students of *Le Chéile Secondary School* in Ballincollig. Together, we explored poems rich in metaphor, epistolary poems, persona poems, found poems, and more. My favourite question or remark to be heard while we discussed a model poem was *why? Why are the stanzas broken up like this? Why is there no grammar?* Too often, I think adults approach poetry from a place of insecurity, where it is usual to pretend to understand a poem, rather than opening the poem up and playing around in it, seeing what's hiding behind the curtains and climbing up the walls.

Most of our time together was spent generating new poetry, and I'm grateful to the students for creating a space that was peaceful and respectful of each other's process and work. If the students wished, they could read their writing aloud to the encouragement of their peers. What I hope is that they

discovered a little more about each other and themselves, that the topics they wrote about sparked new conversations and avenues to explore. Perhaps we had the most fun writing collaboratively, in the form of exquisite corpses and group poems, each individual voice coming together to form something new and strange, and for that vitally important purpose of play. Of course, sometimes we were just having a laugh, and the magic of poetry is that you can have a laugh and create good, meaningful work; humour can be the raw material of a poem.

In the final workshop, where we scoffed chocolate biscuit cake and watched YouTube performances of two slam poems, I asked the students which slam poem they preferred. Nina said she liked them both and that it was hard to compare them as they were both so different, but equally important. This is true of each of the students who wrote together on a Wednesday morning down the back of Ballincollig Library. Each of them brought their own unique voice to the class, from fierce, scalding, powerful poems to quiet, personal, and intimate ones.

Thank you to the wonderful Paul Casey for the opportunity to work with such bright and talented poets, to Cillian Brennan, their grounded and multi-skilled teacher, and to Mary Corcoran, our helpful librarian.

Molly Twomey

Poems

Le Chéile Secondary School



My Sisters

Amélie Thomas

I love how when I'm with you time goes fast
like a song you replay because you didn't realise it finished.

I love laughing at the stupid unfunny things we say,
forgetting that we're not the only people in the room.

I love how we have so many inside jokes
that no one knows what we're talking about most of the time

like we have a big secret that the world doesn't know about yet.

I love the people who turn ordinary days

into days I will never forget.

My friends, my sisters.

Untitled

Falak Hidayat

I've snipped and stitched my soul,
I'm here now where you were.
And when I returned —
Thought of you all day, I think of you.
Now you've moved.

Away from you, I hold hands
With the air.
The endless northern rain between us.
The year dwindles and glows
In the end. You'll come back.

Not the same
but all too similar.

Red and Blue

Falak Hidayat

Endlessly I'd wait
Hopelessly with so much hope
Always I choose you
Now and in any life.

Lego Summer Camp

Alex O'Sullivan

I went to a Lego Summer Camp in 2018,
was like a ghost, invisible and nowhere to be seen,
like I vanished from thin air
but I simply didn't care.
I just ignored that fact with my short blackish hair.
Whilst it was 18, 19 degrees,
when it's time to go home,
sometimes the silence is nice and I prefer to be alone.

The Echo in my Sky

Yaz Bouketta

You move like a quiet storm,
steady, distant, never torn.
A mind of numbers, sharp and bright,
seeing the world in black and white.

Yet somewhere in the space between,
I swore I glimpsed a golden gleam —
a softness hidden, hard to trace,
a fleeting spark behind your face.

You spoke in logic, clear, resigned,
while I wove meaning into time,
I wondered if you ever knew
the weight of words you never used.

You never chased, yet never stayed,
a presence felt, but never stayed.
Like a comet grazing past my hands,
gone before one understands.

And still, your name can steal my breath,
a whisper haunting, never lest.
For even if we fade, rewind,
somewhere, I know, you're crossing my mind.

Height of Silence

Yaz Bouketta

You slip between my thoughts like echoes in the dark.
A name I don't whisper, but still carves through my heart.
You were here, then gone, then here once more,
A cycle of silence I never asked for.

I tried to lock you away in the past,
But the key never fit, and the doors never last.
The months passing by, so simple, so slight,
Yet you linger like a ghost in the coldest of nights.

You reached for me once, then let go again,
Left me to wonder where we might have been.
Was it just a habit, a flicker, a game?
Or did you feel it — this ache with no name?

I tell myself I won't wait anymore,
that I won't check the quiet for knocks on my door.
But the truth is, even if I never make a sound,
I'll still feel you here, always, around.

Italy

Yaz Bouketta

I wake up, white sheets surrounding me,
the golden hue of the sun waking me up.
I slowly rise from my bed, towards the open window.
The waves crashing against the sand.
Roman sculptures, moulded centuries ago.
The sky blue, not a cloud in sight.
The smell of coffee and cigarettes.
People walking on the cobblestone, the pavements
etched with dust and smoke.
The cool summer breeze, fresh air you've never felt.

1975 – 1976

Max Day

Faded, blurry, lost in white deserts, tarnished
with the racing thoughts of a man
lost in its sand. Drinking
the milk from cacti, searching for scarlet
fruit that travels in the hell,
the no-hell of a land
foreign to him.

The train is rusted, creaking
with the chorus of songs lost
to time, to fermented elixir
dissolving the white sands within
the truth moulded and mutilated
in a dictator's pose.

Keys are pressed with skeletal fingers, notes
falling upon detested ears who won't remember
its creation, in years to come.

When the organs squirm
beneath the skin, he will die, his music falling
once again upon detested ears,
who will remember?

Kneel for the Stars

Max Day

The graveyards above the clouds call to me, stars
like how I had hoped to become,
glittering and glistening upon the sky's darkened velvet.
Singing their frail song of hope,
its fragility shattered glass upon snow,
sprinkled with droplets of scarlet.

Freedom calls from below creaking floorboards.
Bellowing his booming chant in applause,
a standing ovation from the faceless crowd beneath
the skies, looking up at me from the cemetery of stars.

Scribbled notes upon parchment discarded,
blackened, crying from its sparkling stench
that clawed at my throat, and memories
tarnished by the man I call a God,
unable to ignore his blasphemy.

He'll never be a god and I
will no longer be his sun
but a sun, a star within dark velvet dirt
sent upwards by my standing ovation.

An Actor

Max Day

Are you a man playing the part of many
or many playing the part of one?

A costume to be worn beneath
the spotlight, the eyes
close and far.

Everyone is a stage and a person
is a character for the universe
to play, a statement
to be made and thrown
away.

Life is a god, you embrace
the director who tells you
where to go, who to be, how
to act the role of many
and how to act the role of one.

Gaeilge, a chara

Max Day

You are a pathetic, pointless thing.

Look at yourself, clawing out of that grave, begging
for someone to save you

as you are buried beneath the reddish bricks from the pale
streets of Dublin.

We despise you and we despise ourselves.

We might as well sew up our mouths
and cut out our tongues

and gouge out our eyes so we cannot see
the words on the pages.

Throughout the ages, they condemn us
and the men on their jewels, bulging,
burrowing into our flesh, chewing up our insides
like hagfish

praying to the mirror they force
upon the ones without tongues.

Do they miss you? We don't
know how to speak

the poetry you once gave us and
you are drawing your final breaths.

Citron

Max Day

Remember the orange trees:
they are rotten beneath the flesh
despite their sweet citrus scent.
Do not feed from their branches,
do not sing their song that draws you
in, within their falling leaves. They won't grow back.
The forest is yours and not theirs,
there are trees that bear sweeter fruit
that you can nourish, watch them grow —
they will house birds and fungi
sprawling beneath the forest floor
holding each other, speaking under foliage
of wisdom, of kindness.
They turn green in the spring and they will not stay
that way but their fruit does not rot.
Year after year they will flourish.
Do not trust the evergreen: they will scratch
you with their needles, drawing out
infection. The deciduous is soft,
caring, when they bear fruit without rot or mould.
They keep your forest as a home.

Grapefruit

Max Day

You tell me not to eat grapefruit. It sickens me
to lose something I never had.

Without grapefruit, you can fall asleep
to the sound of muffled daydreams
writhing against plastic.

You say I can't eat grapefruit. I will overdose
on happiness. You are right, I am afraid
it will cause my heart to stop
from the sheer normality, its mortality
has near-vanished.

It has spent half of its life lost,
a half-life lost will do nothing
to quench its newfound wonder, it wanders, soft and free.

You tell me not to eat seafood,
I am afraid I have to agree.

The Woman of Kinsale and Crows

Max Day

There's a little shop that sits
upon the quaint streets of Kinsale.
It explodes with life, your life and colour.
Sunset orange and crystal green.
I see you smile beneath the sign,
arms spread-eagled like the crows you speak to
and the robins you feed.
The sailboat-woman speaks of you fondly.
She remembers your warm summer welcome.
She tells you stories and you talk
until the sun teases the sea.
Every brick that paves this town
is touched with your footsteps.
They say it's stone cold, stone mad
that you left so soon,
when you have so many things to say
and so many things left unsaid
to the woman of Kinsale and crows.
She has flown her robin's nest.

Happy Shoes

Nina Kershaw

The beautiful sunny yellow colour
of your laces and your fabric,
the white sole and DC's logo,
you were my favourite pair I ever had,
the pair that gave me the nickname
Happy Shoes that one summer while camping.
You were my sidekicks.

I'd bring you everywhere from
walking to climbing trees and skateboarding,

but then I grew and you no longer fit.
So as I put on a new pair of black Vans
with a white strip down the middle,
I'll always know that they'll never be as good as
my yellow happy shoes.

Home By Starlight

David Deasy Rubio

Home by starlight my love, that's where I'd rather be,
not in a busy bustling city, just us and the sea.
Walking across the sandy strand, hand in hand,
or in a green summer's meadow, surrounded by swallows.
The evening sun lights your gold complexion
and all I could say is *wow...*
I'd rather be with you, wrapped in each other's
warm embrace.
You said you'd paint with me, that's pretty based.
You live so far, but you're always close to me.
Always praying to the Lord that he keeps you in safety.
I wish we could be together, out and about,
dancing under red skies, dancing without a doubt.
Counting stars and shortcuts across green fields.
Watching the sun rise and set,
we have the Lord as our shield.
I love how you're a perfect mix of chaos and art.
Please never keep them apart.
I love your gentleness, your energy, your humour,
your care, your love.
I love you my dear, with everything I have.
I thank you for your love, comfort and care.
Too bad the distance between us is
astronomical.

Dear Young David

David Deasy Rubio

Look at you, sucking your thumb.

Silently watching Mom and Dad, first time parents.

No idea what's going to happen in your life,

who you're going to become.

And that's okay...

You don't need to have everything figured out.

You don't need to worry about the world and its problems.

Let me give you some advice, little one.

Don't waste your childhood, don't wish to grow up.

Don't spend hours online, don't lock yourself in your room.

Get outside, meet new people. Socialise.

Take it from me, you as a 17 year old.

I did all of that, and I wasted my childhood.

What I would give to replay it. Second by second.

Make changes... alas, I can't.

Heed my warning, little one.

Because if you don't, you'll regret it.

May the Lord be with you, young me.

Dear Zeus

David Deasy Rubio

Lord of thunder,

Master of lightning.

You sit on your marble throne,
wearing a pinstripe suit, greyish in tone.

Lightning electrifies your eyes,
golden, luxurious locks of curly hair.

Tell me, Lord of Olympus,
how is your hair so great?

Natural curls, deep golden colour,
you must overwork your hairdresser.

And your beard? Incredible.

So much volume, so much like your hair.

I understand why Kronos waged war on you Olympians.

He was jealous of your hair.

Dear Warhammer

David Deasy Rubio

You greedy, greedy man.

You sit in the back of my mind, scheming,
waiting, plotting.

You ambush me with new models, new value sets,
new legendary heroes.

100, 200, 300, gone within an hour.

Can't squeeze me for more money... right?

You take my money, with greed the Bible spoke of.

Imperial Fists here, 'Tau there, Kriegsmen everywhere.

You hooked me young, building, painting, repeating.

I've come to love this greed-full hobby.

Youth Group

David Deasy Rubio

My youth group is small, 11 people total.

Always loud and talkative.

Did you see the game last night?

Cop on, Joshua.

Just sitting quiet, eating my food, minding my business.

Brain error, cannot compute.

Don't know what's going on.

Try to get involved, 404.

Blocked by a firewall.

Try to feel included, sometimes go too far.

Access denied, connection terminated.

Still love them though, they're good people.

Gotta push through the barrier.

Connection Stable.

My Dad

David Deasy Rubio

My dad is the most average Joe you'll meet.
He wears jumpers and jeans, and shirts that gleam.
He works a 9-5 job, he isn't a snob.
He sighs and laughs, cries and smiles,
and likes to fish with his sons,
and always smells like Zara cologne.
He's an open book, knowledge spewing out.
He's a Formula 1 car, speeding through Silverstone.
He's a hammer, drill, rammer, nail, always
fixing and making, tinkering and building.
He's a book full of terrible and funny jokes.
My dad might be the most average Joe
you'll meet...

but regardless, I still love my dad.

Sometimes I wonder

Elsie O'Regan

Sometimes I wonder

Why the needles prick

Why the bread's crust is rough

Sometimes I wonder

Why the wind on my skin is soft

Why the blue in my mind lingers

Sometimes I wonder

to wonder

Wondering about the concrete persistence

of sometimes

Art

Grace Fitton

There is no such thing as good art,
there is also no such thing as bad art.
There is not only the finished piece
but also the progress, process
and emotions embedded deep within
the piece. Whether that be anger or happiness,
grief or relief, boredom or excitement.
The 'ugly' or the 'praised', the process does
not have to be enjoyable but the piece can
be enjoyed.

People who tell you that art has rules are
liars and if you believe them then you are nothing
but another jester in an empty throne room
trapped by others' beliefs.
People say that you have to do this and
you can't do that.

But tell me what is the point of
creating if the creator cannot
recognise their own work?
Tell me, is it truly your
own art if you allow others
to take over?

Rulebook

Unknown Author

Screams and shrieks echo the halls. Coming
from a voice so unrecognisably recognisable.
The louder and louder he gets, the less he sounds
like himself, the more he sounds like his mother.

He screamed until he could taste blood.
The blood tasted warm. Warmth that felt
so unfamiliar to him it felt cold.
The warmth was a painful reminder. He tasted
salt. Salt from the bitter and useless
tears he wasted. The taste was a reminder
of what he had done. What he sacrificed
by breaking the rules set by his mother.
The rules that he knew all too well.
That taste didn't matter to him. Rules mattered
not him. Rules meant reason. Fear is
love.

His rules are law but it's not
his rulebook, it's hers.

Your actions reflect
onto your child.

It's Still A Big Milestone

Collaborative Poem

My brain is a habitat
for half-formed ideas. I pray
to the plants, overgrown in a ruined monastery
that people will stop sniffing without blowing
their nose, stop scratching forks on plates.

I've already forgotten the feeling of my keys unlocking
the door, of fresh bedding.
I'm proud of my faith in Christ, of myself

for going to school on Tuesday,
for swimming in a river
where a trolley floats in the stream.

The sound of the slow cooker means weird meat.
I want spicy Nandos dancing on my tongue, a hug
from Mam on a bad day. They stole our house
and broke the key, gave us a new one,
now are we free?

I love being sleepy but the summer
keeps getting hotter, my skin is falling off
from all the sweat.

I love my family, my friends but I can't focus
above chatter, it jumbles my brain.
My fingers are bleeding
from all the songs that I've played.

Sometimes all I need is a solid sleep schedule
or a run. Not every day has to be
an adventure, no need to jump the gun. I'm proud

of my junior cert but the new Star Wars
is like rotten food or being stuck in the rain
when everyone you love is warm in the car.

I love slurping McDonald's mango
and pineapple smoothies, posting jokes on Pinterest
that no one gets but my best friend.

Dorn would be proud of my 1k points of Imperial Fists.
I can't stand the smell of sauerkraut and how
I feel when I perform for an audience of discarded clothes.

Sometimes I can't get warm, no matter
how many blankets I burrow under. My brain vibrates,
like a nail against a file. I pretend
everything is a joke, but I have no motivation to put in the work.

Only Oasis is better than yesterday's cinnamon buns
and Capri-Suns at midnight with my cousins.
The people in my life who care

light me up like a funfair. Give me personal space
and my PC, or a plane taking off
for my grandparent's house in Poland, the raindrops

going drip, drip. I'm on a stage but this time
I'm not crying, I'm a flower, perfumy and elegant
like Lynx Blue Lavender or ice cream from Granny's freezer.

I'm moving, I'm breathing but never inhaling
the fish smell in the Farmer's Market on a Wednesday.
I love the Bible, the taste of curry chips
and the final bell of the week.

The Sun

Collaborative Poem

The sun will speak to you if you stare at
it long enough. It speaks in shapes and patterns
that spiral across your vision. It can tell you
good things and bad things. It can tell your fate...
the consequence? The next big thing
to happen in your life.
The next incident, next karma,
the cake of life.
It spills secrets.
It speaks to you in Portuguese.

Too many Secrets.

It will open its eyes, spilling its soul into
yours. It burns, but it does not harm you.

Like getting braces.

Like chugging a drink you hate.

Presentation Secondary School

Poetry by

Ava Corcoran

Fizza Tauseef

Aoibhe Delaney

Mara Noppeney

Maya Zuhaira

Rose McCarthy

Uelle San Juan

Assisting Writer: Niamh Prior

T.Y. Coordinator: David Irwin

Workshops held at Tory Top Library and
Presentation Secondary School

Assisting Librarian: Deirbhile Dennehy



After meeting my workshop participants, it didn't take me long to realise that I was working with a group of very individual, creative and bright young people. Over the course of our nine workshops, I had the honour of witnessing the creation of their poetry — and the remarkable ease with which they produced it. Watching these young poets grow in confidence, finding the courage to use their voices and share their work, was something special.

Our workshops began with an introduction to free-writing, an exercise we used as a warm-up for almost all the subsequent sessions. We also did an activity that helped the students recognise how unique, original and valid each writing voice is. Starting from the same prompt, they quickly saw that everyone produced completely different pieces.

The first poetic form the students explored was the haiku, using it to express colours, emotions and abstract ideas in concrete terms. We also experimented with short prompts that played with unusual word combinations and the

making of metaphors and similes. The students wrote poems from the point of view of objects and created monologues based on imagined voices and perspectives.

Each week we read a variety of poems, including work by Sylvia Plath, Billy Collins, William Carlos Williams, Jo Shapcott, Anne Sexton, Alden Nowlan and Matthew Dickman. The students looked at both content and form, and learned how to discuss poems as a group, sharing their impressions and observations.

Dictionaries played no small role in our sessions, as Tagalog, German and Urdu were the first languages of some of the girls. When one student explained that the rules of poetry in her language are different — with the rhyming word appearing not at the end but at the beginning or second-last position in a line — it struck me as a wonderful opportunity for experimentation. Hearing poems read aloud in the students' mother tongues was a real treat, and the process of translating them into English opened up interesting challenges. In one workshop we broke out a thesaurus and played a game with synonyms.

Many of the girls showed an interest in form and rhyme, so towards the end of the series I decided to throw a challenge their way. I introduced them to the villanelle. We read examples by Derek Mahon, Elizabeth Bishop and Dylan Thomas, using highlighters to mark the repeating lines and rhyming patterns as the students investigated the structure of the form. Then they wrote their own. I had suspected they would be able for it — and I was right. In fact, some of the finest poems they produced were villanelles.

As a way of generating ideas for writing, I asked the students to compile lists of their passions, interests and the things that bring them joy. In some respects, their lists varied widely — skiing, wooden carriages, having an opinion, baking pies — but there was also a striking common thread. Though they expressed it in different ways (walks on my own to clear my head, 2am moments, hiking,

weird books, a clean room...) solitary time was important to all of them. On reflection, that is perhaps not surprising. We spoke about how time alone to think, to daydream, to experience nature, or even to get bored can be an essential part of the writing process.

In our final workshop the students wrote ekphrastic poems inspired by prints of famous paintings, and the results were remarkable — by turns dark, philosophical and poignant. A poem by Anne Sexton inspired by a painting by Vincent van Gogh also prompted discussion about mental health and creativity. Having a creative outlet is important at any stage of life, but perhaps especially during the formative teenage years. Poetry offers an outlet and much more: it is play, intellectual stimulation, and exploration for the writer, and for the reader it can be a source of resonance, insight and entertainment.

It was a real honour to witness the students experiencing all of these things as they developed confidence in their voices and their poetic skills over the course of the workshops. Their poems impressed, amused and moved me. I am immensely proud of the work they produced and of how fully they engaged with the process.

Niamh Prior

Poems

Presentation Secondary School



The Sound Before Silence

Ava Corcoran

As they shoot,
bodies cold and still,
they all go mute.

In an area of brute,
crouched by a hill,
as they shoot.

As soldiers help themselves to loot,
voices shrill,
they all go mute.

Echoes of a heavy boot,
frantic scribbling of a will,
as they shoot.

As they are en route,
flaunting their war skill,
they all go mute.

The rotting of fruit;
are they going to kill,
as they shoot,
they all go mute.

You only live once

Ava Corcoran

Where does time go,
playing with your friends in your housing estate
when your mom says,
'Time for dinner!'

Where does time go,
laughing in class until your chest hurts,
getting no work done and being scolded by the teacher before they say,
'Time to pack up!'

Where does time go,
partying and drinking until your heels come off, your bare feet sticking to the
floor, having the time of your life when the bouncer says,
'Time to leave!'

Where does time go,
Buying your child's uniform ahead of their first day,
them nagging you,
'Time for school!'

Where does time go,
caps on heads, gowns draped over,
degree in hand, your child sarcastically saying,
'Time for pictures!'

Where does time go,
monitors beeping, blood being drawn.
Nurses fluffing your pillows.
Family walking in, standing over you.
One hand in another's, eyelids feel heavy.
A breaking voice whispering,
'Time to go...'

comments on expressing your feelings

Maya Zubaira

if you needed me to
make all these things known
i would tell you

someday, if the moment was due
i'd do my best to make words flow
if you needed me to

because i do wonder what this might turn into
and honestly i don't want to know
but i would tell you

they all say i should push through
and, you know, i just might tomorrow
if you needed me to

but deep down i'm unsure what to do
and my thoughts are full of sorrow
but i would tell you

so now there's my point of view
that i honestly don't even want to show
but i would tell you
if you needed me to

to the crow in front of lidl

Maya Zubaira

i know i told you
that i would give you a piece
of my sandwich when

i come back next time,
and then i never did. i
am sorry for that

getting lost in paintings by escher

Maya Zubaira

walk up the wall, walk down the ceiling
here gravity seems unappealing

doors and windows, big amount
the halls reflecting every sound

one wrong foot, a sealed fate
your clicking steps, they resonate

stairs left and right and all around
get lost in here, you won't be found

walk up the wall, walk down the ceiling
but walk too fast, a funny feeling

orange

Maya Zubaira

leaves are
changing, dropping, rotting.
orange
they're a street lamp shining.
orange.

tangerines are
picked, peeled, eaten.
orange
they're a sunset beaming.
orange.

candles are
lit, burned, extinguished.
orange
they're a soft hue glowing.
orange.

street lamp, sun set, soft hue, orange.

Sahara

Fizza Tauseef

Hair of fire, eyes of sand.

She looked like a desert came to life.

In a room full of darkness she seemed the only source of light.

Yet, she hides as darkness might consume her right.

Hair of fire, eyes of sand,
She was the only light alive.

(Inspired by "Golden tears" by Gustav Klimt)

Stapler

Fizza Tauseef

I am always there to attach them,
to keep them together.

Yet they always accuse me of stabbing
and piercing them, even for mending.

For keeping them together.

And when they part ways,
and are frightened to lose one another,

they return to me
to keep them together.

A nightmare Turned Dream

Fizza Tauseef

Brown guilty eyes, innocent white lies,
Never cease to amaze me, how cruel they can be.

The darkness of those eyes turns gold out and shines.

Yet how can one be so cruel to talk all that bitterness
and yet, once to ears they seemed like honey-glazed knives.

To others it only seems like dagger and blood,

but from her...it's always a gift,
even covered in thorns and spikes,
it's always soft and pleasant.

By her, even death can be sweet.
Just like a nightmare turned dream.

Red

Fizza Tauseef

It is pain and joy,
life and death.
Dream and agony.
It is in all
yet, worlds apart.

Breeze

Fizza Tauseef

You asked me once.
Where does the wind go?
I will tell you now.

Coming from the north, going to the south,
carrying the essence of a million lives around.

Dancing and singing it goes around
warm then cold and colder,
playing with hair and dancing with flowers.

As I wished it took me with it,
carrying me around like a traveller with no home.

I will then tell you,
where the wind goes.

(Inspired by "Your Native Home" by Giuliano Nistri)

Remembrance of Times Long Past

Rose McCarthy

Remembrance of times long past
brings infinite joy, sorrow and regret
all-consuming and forever to last

We dash though the years so fast
it's only when it's too late do I regret my schemes
in remembrance of times long past

I can't negate my regrets, the inevitable past
however deeply I drown, however loudly I scream
it's all-consuming and forever to last

Among these things that leave me aghast
I see small shreds of hope that flutter and gleam
past remembrance of things long past

With anticipation and compassion, eyes upcast
I feel myself touching the surface of this sea
that's all-consuming, *I thought*, and forever to last

I shouldn't wallow in the ocean of the past
and its joy and sorrows in waveswept scenes
Even *with* my remembrance of things long past
I live for the next great day, not the high of the last

Time's Concavity

Rose McCarthy

I suffer the impossibility of inevitability,
as I flow helpless down time's river
with no concept in the realm of probability
that could salvage me from the gulf ahead

And those in the sunlit waters above,
may ask, 'What lies within that gulf?'
I know now it is filled with the emptiness
of merciless inexistence

where the universe I desperately cradled,
my sprawling psyche and feeble perception
become unknown, unexplainable,
till my existence never was

and even inexistent,
perhaps I'm simply concealed in the grasp
of He who is not restrained
by our childish illusions of reality

who wanders unreached space 'neath time
who is perceived and known by none
who is nowhere, and never was
yet still frolics through conceptualisation

He is the one who will veil all one day,
and bring reality to be one with him
to leave behind the timeless void,
which, in its own indifference, always was

Soliloquy of a Miniature Paintbrush

Rose McCarthy

Men utilise me for creation
a blessing which only they hold
from the universe within the mind
and worn hands, this gift is told

That blessing that created art,
the journeys of literature and philosophy
Civilisation only arose from silence
for a seraphim who dangled an epiphany

But soon did the Devil of Grandeur
and the omen of a mass Sepulchre
wherein our gifts and crafted reality
are overthrown just to feed preying vultures

Humanity is the King, he believes
trying to conquer the absurd and the definite
for insignificant philosophers to weep
that they killed God, nature, and the infinite

Woodland

Rose McCarthy

The soul who stands at the forest's facade
sees a fairytale brought to life
Kindly sprites flitter about the firs
as in morning grace the great sun smiles

Proudly does he step forth into life
enthralled in a bizarre fantasy
for the story he etched upon the trees
he believes will be everlasting

But soon the illusion shatters
and scatters around the black undergrowth
Tragedy chokes the soul 'neath the canopy
and he screams throughout the labyrinth

Now, he wanders the rude wilderness
and cries hatred unto the empty sky
crafting a man-made God of evil
to give a name to an indifferent force

The fairytale he wrote upon the oaks
is now a myriad of tragedies
which are truly but bleak fantasies
written not in blind joy, but in blind fury

Suburbia

Rose McCarthy

A path which stretches out to nowhere
and everywhere all at once,
in the heavenly haven of home

In the orange glow of evening,
and the bright blue and green of day
rolls the odyssey of childlike play

When the houses become paintings
under blue and orange light
when a thousand trees grow pink

And every towering tree
scrawny brown, grand deciduous, white pine
is a twin to a house

The grass is dewy, the air humid
and the sunset on the trees
whispers a story of the early sun

Mother by Choice

Aoibhe Delaney

I did not grow beneath your heart,
but in your love I found my start.
You took me in while skies were grey,
and held my hand along the way.

You gave me light when mine was dim,
showed me that love comes from within.
Not bonded by blood but bonded so tight,
you are my darkness into light.

Not just a house, but so much more,
My home, my heart, our love so pure.
You didn't have to love me or owe me a thing,
yet you stayed by my side with all the joy you bring,

Through every storm and every ache,
you built me strong so I wouldn't break.
You got us here all on your own,
you filled our hearts with love unknown.

You are one but you are enough,
so strong - fragile and still so tough.
The days are dark and the days are long,
but in your eyes I still belong.

No man's hand, no man's aid,
yet you gave and yet you stayed.
So when they ask who made me whole,
when I was on fire you gave me the coal,

I'll say your name with a smile on my face,
My mother, my best friend - never to be replaced.

Tawid-Tulay (*Crossing the Bridge - Tagalog version*)

Uelle San Juan

Hay, miss ko na ang Pilipinas.
Sana ay hindi ako nagmadaling mawalay.
Tiis-tiis lang, lahat naman ay lumilipas.

Sa bilis ng dila, pag-translate ng isip ay hindi makaligtas.
Bakit ang bilis ng oras, ngunit ang paligid ay tila matamlay.
Hay, miss ko na ang Pinas.

Kahit anong pilit, ang pangungulila ay walang lunas.
Bawat gabi, ang dalangin ay muling humimlay sa tunay na bahay.
Tiis-tiis lang, lahat naman ay lumilipas.

Tanggap ko na ang hirap para sa mas magandang bukas.
Natututo na akong humakbang sa banyagang tulay.
Hay, miss ko na ang Pilipinas.

Kampante na ang loob, natagpuan na ang sariling lunas.
Ang dayuhang lupain na'y ituturing ko na ring bahay.
Tiis-tiis lang, lahat naman ay lumilipas.

Heto ang realidad, harapin ang bukas.
Narito na tayo. Sa Diyos, tayo ay laging nakaakay.
Hay, miss ko na ang Pilipinas.
Tiis-tiis lang, lahat naman ay lumilipas.

Crossing the Bridge *(English version)*

Uelle San Juan

Oh, how I miss the Philippines.
I wish I hadn't rushed to leave.
Just endure it; everything passes anyway.

My mind's translation cannot survive the speed of their tongues.
Why is time so fast, yet surroundings feel lifeless?
Oh, how I miss the Philippines.

No matter how I try, this homesickness has no cure.
Every night, my prayer is to rest back in my real home.
Just endure it; everything passes anyway.

I've accepted the hardship for the sake of a better tomorrow.
I am learning how to walk on this foreign bridge.
Oh, how I miss the Philippines.

The heart is at ease; it has finally found its own cure.
The foreign land is now also considered my home.
Just endure it; everything passes anyway.

This is reality, face the tomorrow.
We are here now. In God, we are always guided.
Oh, how I miss the Philippines.
Just endure it; everything passes anyway.

Storm

Mara Noppency

They tried to take us down
Pulling and tugging on my clothes
Louder and louder the wind howled
While playing with our lives

Holding on for my dear life
My grip on the person next to me
When out of a sudden
The force of the water separated us

The taunting laugh of the wind
Drowned out my cry
As I had to watch the person
drowning in the darkness.

(Inspired by "The Shipwreck" by Joseph Mallord William Turner)

Bishopstown Community School

Poetry by

Ami Hurley

Matthew Leahy

Aoibhe Lacey

Mia Hurley

Assisting Writer: Matthew Geden

T.Y. Coordinator: Ciara Twomey

Workshops held at Bishopstown Library

Assisting Librarian: Yvonne Moloney



Over the course of nine weeks our Creative Writing sessions centred on cultivating imagination, curiosity, and confidence in self-expression. Working primarily with a small group, the classes were designed to move away from rigid academic expectations and instead offer a space where creativity could flourish. The emphasis throughout was on experimentation, playfulness, and the freedom to explore ideas without fear of getting things “wrong.”

Each session introduced a new prompt or form, encouraging students to approach writing from fresh and often unexpected angles. We explored traditional structures such as haiku, where students learned to distil thoughts and images into concise, evocative language. This exercise proved particularly effective in sharpening their attention to detail and helping them recognise the power of simplicity. In contrast, ekphrastic poetry invited them to respond imaginatively to visual art, opening up discussions about interpretation and perspective while allowing them to translate images into words.

One of the most engaging aspects of the programme involved reimagining familiar narratives. Students rewrote fairy tales, often subverting expectations

or retelling stories from alternative viewpoints. This not only strengthened their narrative skills but also encouraged critical thinking about storytelling itself—who gets to tell a story, and how it can change depending on perspective.

A recurring theme throughout the course was the idea of seeing the world differently. This was perhaps most vividly realised in exercises where students were asked to write from the perspective of an insect. By stepping outside of human experience, they produced work that was imaginative, surprising, and often humorous, demonstrating a growing willingness to take creative risks.

Seasonal and thematic prompts also played an important role in maintaining engagement. Students wrote Christmas card poems that balanced sincerity with wit, as well as pieces inspired by Valentine's Day and even Friday the 13th. These prompts helped anchor their creativity in shared cultural moments while still allowing for highly individual responses. We also had a session looking at film poetry and the artist Jennifer Redmond very kindly came in to talk to the students about her experience in this area.

Attendance numbers varied from week to week, but a core group of dedicated and enthusiastic students remained consistently involved. This continuity helped to foster a supportive and collaborative atmosphere, where participants felt comfortable sharing their work and offering feedback to one another. I was really impressed by their encouraging words to each other and how often the poems became a collaborative process.

One notable trend across the group was a strong affinity for rhyme. Many students gravitated naturally towards rhythmic and rhyming structures, often using them as a foundation to build confidence in their writing. This preference provided an opportunity to explore how form and sound can enhance meaning, while also validating their instinctive creative choices.

Overall, the programme highlighted the importance of providing young people with the time, space, and encouragement to explore their imaginations. By engaging with a wide variety of prompts and forms, students developed not only their writing skills but also a greater sense of creative confidence.

Matthew Geden

Poems

Bishopstown Community School



The Fly

Ami Hurley

I am a fly
I fly in the sky
very high
all day and night
I often think what I might
do if I fly into a kite
in the middle of the night
so bye until I find my bed
and sleep tight
until morning light

Ghosts

Ami Hurley

One night sitting at home
I was on my phone alone
when I heard a sound
like someone walking around.
Then it stopped.
I heard my name
and my heart dropped
as my Mum had texted
I'm at the shop.
Nobody was here.
Maybe it was the ghost
I fear.

Cinderella Switched

Ami Hurley

Cinderella is a nice kind girl
she's mistreated by her stepmother
and her stepsisters when her father dies
she wants to go to the ball
but has to clean the hall
her fairy godmother comes right in
makes her a dress and the night begins.

She thought it was good but then it switched
she went to the ball and her dress unstitched
she now looks like she's in her scrubs
her dress has gone she wanted a prince
but she got a dog
she lost her shoe and it's not been found
she walked home got lost
went to walk around
there she was at a loss.

When I came home my stepmother was cross
what if I can never go to another ball
maybe I'll never find my person at all.

Necessity (Fly)

Matthew Leaby

Wings buzzing like static, hovering like
a thought. I search for food, my species
and stomach wrought. A window of opportunity
offered nothing but pain, the buzz gaining
more sustain. A door opens and I
attain passage. The fruits appear
tenfold and glassy. I find a landing, ashy
it pulses with warmth and bucks like
a bull. Alas I have no choice. From
the creature I pull. The red flashes
in front of me but not in anger.
Meal fulfilled I depart from my
impromptu hangar. The door has
slammed shut but the window will
save me. I shoot at it and it saves
me. Bound by web I have entered
the cycle. It struck out of
necessity not greed. I should've taken
only what I need(ed).

Lost in the Concrete Jungle

Matthew Leaby

Amongst the lights
I waited. The deal fell through
the lights shone on.

Balloon

Matthew Leaby

she promised she would hold on tight
it was kept for not a day or night
it flew away out of sight
she cried but the cameras saw nothing
they searched low but to look high they failed
held by a cold air no one wailed
even though it was silent it never let go

Hollow

Matthew Leaby

A blur of white skimmed the green
the roots grabbed, the bushes pried
but no one knew the hollow inside
a gargantuan oak, it's heart
now a home. The white fluff
was plentiful. The wind outside
billowed, the large lay under the small
like pillows.

Bad Poem

Aoibhe Lacey

Today I am sitting in poetry class,
the goal is to write a really bad poem.

I don't know what to do.

So far this poem doesn't rhyme,
is this a crime?

That sounded weird
that's what I feared

I might sound mad
but will that make the poem bad?

There is a prize to make the worst one
it's meant to be fun.

Reading this feels a bit awkward.

Do you think I will win the award?

What if it's a test?

Oh well, I tried my best.

Little Mermaid

Aoibhe Lacey

I am just a young girl
who wants to give dancing a whirl
but I fear this dream will fail
as I'm Ariel the little mermaid with a tail.
But I do suppose I have a choice
give the ugly old sea witch my voice
and then I can give real life a try
but what can I do without a voice to sing talk or cry?
Don't worry I have a plan
but I wonder if I can,
maybe I'll play an awful trick
and pretend I'm sick.
I want to get the prince's ring
so I need my voice to sing.
What if I go to her place while she sleeps
and do the switch without a peep?
I'll get my legs and keep my voice
and give the ugly old sea witch no choice.
Few months later I'm living on land
while the witch is stuck beneath the sand.

Pain

Aoibhe Lacey

I love all films that start with rain
often this means that the main
character is in pain.

This may seem confusing so let me explain
just think for a minute and use your brain
it's often the characters who always complain
are the ones who end in pain.

Older

Aoibhe Lacey

When I'm older in my later years
I'll stop shedding all my tears
I'll go outside without a care
I won't be bothered with what I wear
I'll go out at night and dance in the rain
I hope to god I'll have no pain.

I Cannot Go to School Today

Aoibhe Lacey

I cannot go to school today,
my friends won't be in to shout, "Hey!"
I imagine walking in picking at my jumper
as the sleeve begins to fray.
I wonder how I'll manage
to get through the day.
I practice in my head what I'll say
to other people as I step
out of my comfort zone
so I won't spend the day all alone
or spend it on my phone.
I take a deep breath and say it is okay,
I can go to school today.

Valentine's Day

Mia Hurley

is a day full of love and hate.
Some might get flowers, some might get paid.
Some are at home with their loved ones and some are at work all day.
Some go out for fancy meals, some just get a takeaway.
Some have the best day, some have a long day.

Things That Scare Me

Mia Hurley

Clowns scare me

Their smiles as wide as a bride's

Their nose as red as blood

Their laugh is as loud as a busy town

Their skin's as pale as a white cat's tail

They try to seem all nice

But really they're all like Pennywise.

Friday 13th Night

Mia Hurley

I love all films that start with rain
going down a window pane.

On a stormy night it doesn't feel right

in my room alone in the night,

snuggled up in my blanket tight

afraid to get a fright

Because it's Friday the 13th night.

Gaelcholáiste Mhuire Ag

Poetry by

Rachel Ní Shúilleabháin

Cian Ó Luasaigh

Jodie Ní Mhuirthile

Leah Ní Chonghaile

Lena Kowalczyk

Assisting Writer: Dairena Ní Chinnéide

T.Y. Coordinator: Cáit Dineen

Workshops held in Blackpool Library

Assisting Librarian: Mary Corcoran



Ba phléisiúr mór domsa deis a bheith agam bualadh le agus oibriú i dteannta na scoláirí misniúla, ábalta seo ó Ghaelcholáiste Mhuire. Bhí gach éinne sásta a gcuid a dhéanamh go hoscailte agus le dúthracht fontach ar fad. Scríobh siad go héasca agus le cur chuige a cheapas a bhí ana shuaithinseach ar fad. Le tacaíocht an mhúinteora Cáit Ní Dhuinín, go dtí gach uile ball den gceardlann a tháinig chugham sa spás álainn sa Leabharlann ar an Linn Dubh i gCorcaigh, ba mhór agam a gcomhoibriú agus an dul chun cinn a fheiscint ina gcuid oibre ó cheardlann go ceardlann. Mo sheasamh oraibh uilig.

Dairena Ní Chinnéide

Poems

Gaelcholáiste Mhuire Ag



Ní Bheidh mo Leithéid ann Arís

Rachel Ní Shúilleabháin

Tá sé éasca é sin a rá agus bheith ar bís
Ach fós im thuairim tá sé saghas brónach
Mar ní féidir liom am a phiocadh go deonach
Níl fhios agat cén lá a mbeidh bás tagtha ar bhláth
Nó cén bhliain a bheidh tú ag imeacht le do chás
Tá sé fíor is dócha, an ainmfhocal sin
Go bhfuil mé im dhuine aonair is tusa freisin
Ceapaim go bhfuil sé go léir thuas san aer
Freagairt gach ceist litríochta sa spéir.

Am

Rachel Ní Shúilleabháin

Bíonn an t-am ag sleamhnú agus ag stad timpeall orainn
I noiméad, blianta agus míonna
Ag tosnú is ag stopadh go críonna
Cuireadh suas agus síos aoíonna
Ag dreapadh na méara ar chloganna
An ghrian á chur suas agus solas a scaipeadh
Ag athrú dath bia ar nós úll agus a bhlaiseadh
Tá pearsantacht ag am agus tá sé an-particléarach
Faoi féar agus séasúr agus an aimsir go léiroch
Ní féidir le haon duine an t-am a stopadh
Bíonn am ag sleamhnú ag rith is ag stopadh.

Port na bPúcaí

Rachel Ní Shúilleabháin

Tá an t-oileán ciúil

Deirtear go bhfuil síóg ag damhsa ar domhan

Ag crochadh timpeall chun rún a chloisint

Gur féidir leo scaipeadh agus iad ag eitilt suas ón abhainn.

Tá an t-oileán ciúin

Mar tá na héin go léir ag luí faoin talamh

Agus na scamail ag iarraidh na plandaí a mharú

Níl aon rud beo ann a thuilleadh.

Tá an t-oileán ciúin

Níl duine ar bith le feiceáil

Ná clog ann chun seiceáil

Nó páiste ann ag gearán

Níl rothar ná bus ná carr

Níl bóthar ann chun tiomáint

Tá an t-oileán ciúin.

Haiku

Rachel Ní Shúilleabháin

Gaoth ag séideadh
trí theach bhriste
níl aon rud beo anseo

Éan ag canadh
Luch beag ag damhsa
tá an cat marbh.

Tá an chaint mar thorann
Is fuath liom an fhuaim
d'imigh mé.

Dhoirt uisce ón spéir
tá na scamail ag caoineadh
níl an ghrian le feiscint.

Tá an t-éan ag fulaingt
tá fuil ar an sneachta
canann sé a amhrán dheireannach.

Tá bean ar na sléibhte
bíonn sí ag screadaíl
gaoth is ainm di.

Bíonn sé ceobhránach anseo
ní féidir leat an fharraige a fheiscint
go dtí go bhfuil tú cailte.

Tá stoirm ag teacht
scamall trom
báisteach ag titim sa dorchadas.

An Grian

Rachel Ní Shúilleabháin

Ceapaim go bhfuil an ghrian uaigneach
Mar tá réaltaí ag an ngealach
Tá scamall ag an spéir chun smaoineamh leis
Agus níl sé sin féaráilte go leor
Tugann an ghrian teas dúinn nuair atá sé fuar
Ach nílimid in ann aon rud a thabhairt
Thar nais go dtí an rud a chosnaíonn muid ó chontúirt
An bhfuil fhios ag an ghrian go bhfuil sí chomh speisialta
Gur choimeád sí linn beo i gcóir na billiúin blianta
Go bhfuil a hainm ar eolas timpeall an domhain ag daoine
Agus tá cinn ann a dhéantar staidéar uirthi dá saol ar fad
Is cad a tharlóidh má stadann sé
Tá sí uaigneach go leor gan dabht
Ach fós bíonn sí ag scaipeadh a solas ar an tír ar nós Tiarna
Grian is ea an focal uirthi
An bhfuil ainm aici, nó anam?
B'fhéidir nach bhfuil, agus táim ag staidéar chomh dian
Ach ceapaim nach ndéanfaimid ár ndóithin don grian.

An Fhoraois

Cian Ó Luasaigh

Cogarnaíonn an ghaoth i gcoinne ceannbhrat na nduilleog
Bogann na taibhsí le héasaíocht cleachtaithe
Bogann na duilleoga agus ligeann siad isteach beagán solais
Scaoileann na scáthanna, amach as radharc
Bíonn fonn íseal ag na héin
Bíonn an ghrian ag canadh go dtí go bhfeicimid an ghealach
Torann toirneach, sileann scamail báistí
Ag fanacht leis amárach, le déanamh arís.

Níl aon Tinteán mar do Thinteán féin

Cian Ó Luasaigh

Abhainn na Laoi ag crónán go híseal
Trí dheatach móna agus báisteach airgid
Lonraíonn tinte ársa fós
Doirteann solas na gealaí cosúil le huisce
Ag lonrú solas airgid ar dhroim an eallaigh
Agus rinneadh féarach de shoilse
Cosúil le dreancaidí tine sa spéir.

Sé mo Laoch

Cian Ó Luasaigh

Ní chaitheann sí cóta ná ní iarann sí moladh
Ní dheineann sí ach seasamh daingean
Ag taispeáint ar chéad bhealach ciúin
Nuair a thiteann rudaí as a chéile
Ní ritheann sí – fanann sí ann
Láidir, gan béicíl, socair sa lasair
Más cróga mé ar chor ar bith
Is amhlaidh gur thóg sí mé ar an mbealach sin.

An Mhaidin

Cian Ó Luasaigh

Doirteann solas na maidine
Ór ar fuaid mo chraicinn
Cuireann gal caife te i gcruach
An aer fionnfhuar glan agus tanaí
Agus scuaibeann féar bog mar
Dhrúcht mo chosa agus an
Lá ag teacht isteach.

Haiku

Cian Ó Luasaigh

Foraoisí Meirgeacha

Cogarnaíonn solas na maidine
bogann gaoth trí dhuilleog olóige
coinníonn lochán socair an spéir

Loinnir

Grian órga ag breacadh
A deir an ghealbhán
Scoileann geimhreamh sealbh

Cruth na fuaime

Lonraíonn soilse cathrach
buille croí ag rásaíocht mar dhrumaí
méadaíonn eagla ina amhrán

Na Scáthanna

Caitheann an t-am solas airgid
macallaí an t-am atá thart
canann an scáth fós.

Oíche Chiúin

Cian Ó Luasaigh

I ngleann stóinthe na hoíche
Shéid an ghaoth i gcogar éiginnte
Folús cúramach folamha
Go deo neamhchinnte.

Mná i mBán

Jodie Ní Mhuirbile

Seasann sí ag fanacht
Ag súil go scaoilfidh duine éigin saor í
Tá sí ceangailte dá ham atá thart agus ní féidir
Léi briseadh amach
Ón áit go dtugann sí baile uirthi
Séideann a gúna bán sa ghaoth
Clúdaíonn a cuid gruaige dorcha dhubh a haghaidh
Agus deor amháin tuillte as a súile
Nuair a chuimhníonn sí ar gach a chaill
Sí an lá sin i mí na Samhna.

Tír gan Teanga Tír gan Anam

Jodie Ní Mbuirthile

Labhraíonn muid é
Cloisimid é
Feicimid é i gcomharthaí
Canaimid amhrán agus muid ag damhsa le fuaimeanna
Na bhfiúit agus na cláirsí.

Cloisimid scéalta faoi cé chomh crua agus a throid
Daoine ar a son
Ár gceart chun ár nglór a úsáid
Ar son ár dteanga.

Is cuid dár mbród ár dteanga
Gan é bheimís caillte
Ní bheadh anam againn.

Mo Chairde

Jodie Ní Mbuirthile

Is iad mo chairde mo laochra
Bíonn siad ann i gcónaí nuair a bhíonn siad de dhith orm
Tá siad cineálta, dílis agus cliste
Tá a fhios agam go mbeidh siad ann domsa
I gcónaí mar a bheidh mise dóibhsan.

Mo Thuismitheoirí

Jodie Ní Mhuirthile

Thug siad beatha dom

Mhúin siad dom conas a bheith mé féin lena gcabhair

Motháim grá nuair a bhíonn siad gar agus

Fiú nuair a bhíonn siad i bhfad uaim.

Feicim conas is mian liom a bheith

Mar gheall orthu cloisim cé mhéid meas atá acu

Agus tá a fhios acu

Cé mhéid grá atá agam dóibh

Is iad mo laochra.

Fear Uaigneach

Jodie Ní Mhuirthile

Nuair a fheiceann tú é, bíonn tú ag stánadh. Nuair a bhí sé ag iomlasc ar an póirse lena todóg ina bhéal. Feiceann tú an toit ag priosla amach as a bhéal agus cloisfidh tú é ag ligint casachtach amach as. Déanfaidh sé macalla. Tá filltín air ar fuaid a aghaidh a chuireann ar cumas do an t-am a tuiscint. Faigheann tú boladh an taise ón loch agus caoineann tú. Cuimhníonn tú conas a bhí sé sular bhásaigh sé.

Haiku

Jodie Ní Mhuirthile

Réaltaí ag taitneamh go geal
féachaim suas orthu
titeann siad go léir

Grian sa spéir
dath buí air
te i dteagmháil

Rinceann an cailín
Tá an ghealach ag stánadh le solas
eitlíonn an cailín

Iasc ag snámh thíos
Slogann an aigéan iad
Uisce ag gol.

Haiku

Leah Ní Chonghaile

Ritheann an madra
cos tapaidh
gaoth fuar timpeall

An teaghlach sa charr
ag caint go sona sásta
imríonn ceol go ciúin.

An ghealach sa speir
Na réalta geala
Spéir dorcha.

Beag Brúfar

Leah Ní Chonghaile

Siúlann an madra beag na sráideanna
Fuar, scanraithe, ag crith.
Leagann sé a cheann gruama chun sosa
Faillí agus faí ag rith taobh istigh dá intinn
A bheag bhrúfar ag silleadh timpeall
Gach ciceáil, gach bualadh tugann sé
A bheag bhrúfar beagánín síos.
Ní fhásann an fhuacht ach éiríonn an tine níos lú
Ár madra saonta ag fás go fóill
Is cuimhin leis an scairt, an troid an bealach a chaillfeadh sé
Ár madra beag
Áit a roinntear cineáltas.

Seo í Mise

Lena Kowalczyk

Dúirt siad liom gur tine a bhí i mo chultúr

Gan é a chur amach.

Dúirt siad liom é a choinneál gar.

Ní raibh cúram orm faoi mo chúlra

Ní raibh sé tábhachtach dom

Le himeacht ama ghlac mé leis an bhfíric

Go n-ithim bia difriúil

Ag canadh amhráin difriúla

Mar a dúirt siad liom

Seo í mise.

Blown a wish – my bloody valentine

Lena Kowalczyk

Shéid an coineall

Dóchas don chuid is fearr

Beidh sé ceart go leor.

When You Sleep – my bloody valentine

Nuair a chodlaíonn tú

Cad atá fíor agus cad nach bhfuil

Ní fhéadfainn a rá leat. .

Haiku

Lena Kowalczyk

Sreabhann an abhainn
ag bualadh na ballaí
ag silleadh saor in aisce.

Éistím leis an torann
na duilleoga ag crith
suaimhneas an earraigh.

#20 Aphex Twin

Bíomaí na gréine
tosnaíonn maidin nua
tús nua a bhí ann.

Sakura-Devon Hendryx

Aura bándearg
giall ar an urlár
tá áilleacht i ngach áit.

Ag Éirí Dom ar Maidin

Lena Kowalczyk

1:

Mo mham is í mo laoch,
tá sí athléimneach agus láidir.
Cuirim a lán ceisteanna uirthi
mar tá sí an- chliste agus
is mian liom a faisnéis a fháil.
Is breá liom mo mham.

2: Ciúnas an Tí

Céimeanna cois m'anam
Síochán dom féin
Tost sa bhus
Uair a chloig luath –
Síochán dom féin.

Mayfield Community School

Poetry by

Amy McCarthy

Victoria Makinde

Melissa Duarte

Ciaran Hawkins

Samuel Blackshields

Calum Colohan

Assisting Writer: Lani O'Hanlon

T.Y. Coordinator: Kieran Golden

Workshops held in Mayfield Library and at
Mayfield Community School

Assisting Librarian: Richard Forrest



This was my second season in Mayfield Library, working on *The Unfinished Book of Poetry*. I was met with a warmth and welcome—Richard Forest and the staff unfailing in their kindness, photocopying, finding books, offering water and biscuits, smoothing date changes and other hiccups. Sometimes we slipped in just in time to hear Richard tell stories to the little ones, to watch him tuck a book beneath Fergus, the giant teddy; the place itself—paintings, carved wood, hand carved walking sticks—kept offering sparks of inspiration. Read Calum Colohan's *The Walking Stick* and you will see what I mean.

After a few false starts with Mayfield Community School, the poets began to arrive—each voice a new light, each line a fresh way of seeing. We opened every session with Ó Bhéal's five word challenge, that small and now famous engine of invention; from it came surprises, like Melissa Duarte's 'The Glass Witness in Israel'. We turned also to 'The Song of Amergin', and from that old music sprang poems of Cork City—Sam Blackshield's image stays with me: '*The Opera House asleep during the day, / alive at night, music flooding through*

glass.'

Following the five word prompt, students chose a card bearing an abstract word and set about making it flesh—testing the distance between idea and sense, between the abstract and the sensual. The results were startling: in Victoria Makinde's poem, freedom becomes "*a baby no longer being carried / and able to walk by herself,*" a small emancipation rendered in tender detail.

Time was short, so I turned to ekphrastic practice in its broadest sense. We wrote to paintings and photographs, to wood carvings and books, to stones and songs. Out of those prompts came quiet, luminous work: Amy McCarthy's 'Glass', where '*a vessel full of colours seems to whisper soliloquies to itself*'; Ciaran Hawkins's 'Nookie', a photograph of Granny Hawkins framed by a Welcome sign on the Coal Quay, memory and place braided together. Phones yielded images that opened into poems of war, exile, and homelessness—images that ask for witness and gave rise to voice.

We read ekphrastic poems across time and form—Donald Platt's 'Cloud Study', Paula Meehan's 'My Father Perceived as a Vision of St Francis', Breda Spaight's 'Tonight I'm in Love with Rock', Gbenga Adesina's 'How to Paint a Girl', Danusha Laméris's 'The Perfumer', Richard Scott's 'Emerald', Molly Twomey's 'Fionnuala', my own 'Duénde', and Rainer Maria Rilke's 'Archaic Torso of Apollo'. Each poem opened a door for the students.

Poetry is craft, dream and pilgrimage; in a short time, these writers have shown gifts—internal rhyme and rhythm, metaphor that surprises, imagery, narrative and lyric braided, humour and depth, and a humane attention to the world. Each student carries something important and vital to say about their life and the lives around them.

I hope they keep writing, that they attend Miss McMahan's Monday lunchtime creative writing club, that these voices continue to gather and grow.

My thanks to Shauna McMahon for her steady support, to Principal Kieran Golden for discovering these poets, and to Paul Casey and Cork City Libraries for creating this ongoing, invaluable chance for new writers to be read and heard.

Lani O'Hanlon

Poems

Mayfield Community School



In the Alleyway

Amy McCarthy

The man sits in the doorway on the cold
flat pavement, finding comfort in his home,

he has white lips, a pale face
from endless nights of worry,

his eyes look sad and defeated,
a melancholic expression on his face

his gaze lowers to the ground,
he fidgets with his fingertips,

unable to truly look anyone
in the eye. His blue jacket

is wrinkled and ripped, the fabric
is old with dark blue stripes

on the baby blue surface.
His sweatpants are torn and old,

as thin as a piece of paper soaked
with rain. The small porch above

cannot protect him from the cruelty
of the world, he shivers and the man

he once could have been, dissolves.
Rain drenches through his ripped clothes.

He is alone and it is clear as day to me
he is scared and losing himself,

worry lines are etched into his sad face,
he slouches into the ground and fades away.

The Older I Get

Amy McCarthy

The world gets even colder like an abandoned sunset,
why is it a thrill to make another human feel ill?

People forget how much their words
can have an immense affect.

I wish, just for a moment they would feel regret
for the reckless words they may have said.

How cruel the world can be. The privilege
of a warm home or being homeless begging

for scraps. The world is cruel, lifeless
and dull, but one can make a change.

Would you decide to be that one?

Euphoria

Amy McCarthy

The architecture is beautifully sculpted,
I find myself in love and reach out my hand.
The people near me are as excited as me.

The tour bus moves slowly, lets my eye capture
this glimpse of the Eiffel Tower, sparkling, bright.
A man is dancing on the street playing his trumpet.

This moment feels surreal, I wish that I could freeze it.

Song

Amy McCarthy

I am the sound of waves crashing instinctively in the sea,
the bull causing as much chaos as I can fighting
the battles of the land. I am the moon and stars.
I am a daisy; I fall and rise with the weather,
I am the sound of rain during a vicious thunderstorm,
a fish swimming away before I get caught.

Abundance

Amy McCarthy

The warm grass when I'm barefoot on a sunny day.
Flowers glistening with rain in May.

The sound of birds every morning
when I wake in my bedroom.

The smell of fresh baking as the day begins,
Like falling and not being afraid.

Faces

Amy McCarthy

How to paint the expressions on our faces,
there are many steps: hold in your laugh
during a serious situation, shield
your personality to protect it,
use a paint brush and paint gently.

Man in the Mirror by Michael Jackson
is playing, we listen, we sing the words
loudly. Do we ever fully comprehend
what the words say? 'Make a change,
make a change.' Hopeful yet misunderstood.

Glass

Amy McCarthy

The glass stays frozen
in time,

droplets of water
acutely aware

of its stillness.

The acrylics
make it seem

full of life,
curiosity,

the glass is full
of colour

and yet
so still.

Quiet yet loud.
Almost

like it is whispering
soliloquies to itself

in the confined silence.

Stone

Amy McCarthy

This stone is like the sun shining
on an eventful day, the touch

of freshly cut grass, glistening
in May. This stone knows

there is always sun, even
on a cloudy day, understands

that stars don't appear until
night but are always there

This stone makes me feel
at ease like sunset or the sound

of rain pouring down. I am
human, it's okay to make mistakes.

Paths

Amy McCarthy

Two paths in front of me,
one leads to all that is familiar,

the other leads to the unseen,
the unknown. The first one

fills me with longing, a sense
of comfort: the smell of fresh baking,

the touch of warm wool and money
notes. The other path is filled with hope:

the splash of waves, swans in the water,
and beginnings: to let go

of this inner storm and walk
towards the yellow, the promise, my life.

Kindness

Amy McCarthy

Kindness is not just doing a big favour for someone. Kindness is everywhere even in the smallest of smiles, the occasional hello and reminding someone that they are not alone.

Kindness is patting a friend's shoulder whenever they are in need, it is a momentary hello when you pass an elderly couple on the street, it is laughing at your brother's jokes even when they are unbelievably unfunny.

Kindness is patient. Kindness is beautiful.

Kindness can brighten one's day even when they don't feel like smiling, although the seasons change and the world gets colder, kindness is powerful and strong, it will shine through life when the rainfall is over.

Down by the River

Amy McCarthy

There's a river on the concrete
pavement beside the grass.

Here you can wash your sins away,
begin to let go of the past.

The river is a beautiful shade of steel blue,
which is quite acceptable but why

aren't shades of brown acceptable too?

The world shows many colours:

white, pink, yellow, green.

The darker those colours, the more hatred.

Protestors wish us away with their stomping.
Chant hateful words. Wish we were dead.

Down by the river there's a fountain,
if you step into the fountain

racism and hatred shall end.

I try to put one foot in front of the other,

wind up back at the river again. The river is life.

But I may never get to live to the fullest.

I thought we all bled the same blood?

That only matters in some circumstances.

Down by the river there's a way. I go to the river.

The Woman in the Elevator.

Amy McCarthy

There is a woman in the elevator.

She is small, fragile and weak.

There's a sadness in her eyes

as if she's holding in tears.

Her hands are shaking and she

refuses to look into our eyes.

Her lip quivers and I begin to shiver.

This woman is so deeply pained

She needs someone to ask her

if she is okay. Her pain is visible

in the abrupt shaking of her head.

I offer her a smile, not too big

but certainly not too little,

just enough to let her know

she is worth more

than the bright stars that glisten.

Home

Victoria Makinde

My phone is like a treasure chest
because of this one photo. I like it best.

It is not just a screen or a piece of glass,
it is how I hold onto the years gone past:

there is my big brother Favour
standing with a smirk on his face,

leaning on the wall with his legs crossed,
one hand in the pocket of his dark blue jeans,

the other hand resting on his chin,
he wears a light blue t-shirt with white spots,

a black bag across his chest.

The wall behind him is painted mint green,

and a balcony of sculpted white swans,
his dark brown leather shoes on red block tiles.

This was our house in Ibadan City Nigeria
where I used to play and make the memories

I carry today. Every little part is tucked
here and kept in my heart. No matter

how far away I might go. I can visit
the home I know is saved on my phone.

How To Paint My Brother's Face

Victoria Makinde

I'll start by arranging a set of paints and brushes,
on my canvas: a stroke of deep black for his hair
and eyebrows, deep brown for his skin. I'll use
black again for his long eyelashes, light brown

for his eyes to make sure they shine, exactly
like they do when he's outside in the sun.

This Stone Knows

Victoria Makinde

This stone looks like a rock inside glass,
feels smooth to the touch but rough at the edges.

This stone knows pain, the past
has marked its body. This stone understands

time and being frozen. When I look at this stone
I imagine someone desperately reaching

and wanting to shine and I remember.

Carnival

Victoria Makinde

The sky painted red because of the fireworks.
In the distance a spiritual man stared in horror

at the spectacle of another man with a ghost
mask. I thought it was spectacular.

The raging fire licked the ocean surface
turning the sky into a fluff of grey smoke.

In the distance a red chair
was slowly sinking into the ocean.

A Painting in Mayfield Library

Victoria Makinde

The cat stared straight ahead, its predatory
eyes locked on its prey. It took a stance,

right leg at the front, fully prepared to pounce.

Trust

Victoria Makinde

Being with my friend Melissa,
The smell of *spag* for dinner,
family love, *Oreo* ice-cream
and my brother Favour laughing.

Mayfield

Victoria Makinde

I am the wind that blows through Mayfield,
the wave on the River Lee.
I am the stag that fought a great battle.
the eagle that soars through the sky.
I am a flash of lightening,
the rarest of flowers on the plain.

The Scent of a Colour

Victoria Makinde

The big blue vase holds the bouquet of flowers,
red, blue, pink, yellow. So many vibrant colours,
but two flowers on the ground as if the vase
has given up holding onto to them, letting
them fall to the ground, giving up on them.

Seagull

Victoria Makinde

The calm blue sky, devoid of any light from the sun, in stark contrast to the violent waves crashing into the rocks and the shore line. I stood at a distance observing the scene, seaweed littered the sandy beaches, adding a new colour to the sand. The air smelt of iodine, there were goosebumps all over my skin from the cold. In the distance a seagull flew over the violent waves, gazing down at the ocean, being careful not to be carried away by the currents, searching for an unlucky fish for dinner. I couldn't look away from the bird. I felt troubled. The bird risking its life to eat. I'll have a hot meal waiting for me when I get home. How ignorant I've been to the difficulties creatures face, while we humans just go to the store and buy whatever we want. How oblivious we are of hardship, we sit pliant in our homes, comfortable on our couches, watch TV. If we are ever thrust into the wild, we won't survive.

In the Library

Victoria Makinde

I pick a book from the shelf,
on the cover a picture of the sun,
it is so bright, the cover soaked
golden. I open the first page,
captivated by the description
of sky and the main character
soaring with the confidence
of an eagle.

War

Victoria Makinde

There is panic everywhere,
bombs rain down
on houses and innocent people,

parents are separated
from their children in the melee.
Somewhere else

a man watches this on his TV,
a bottle of beer in his hand,
indifferent to the slaughter.

Freedom

Victoria Makinde

Being able to soar like an eagle,
or swim in the waves of the ocean.

A forest unbothered by humans,
creatures and birds undisturbed.

A baby no longer being carried
and able to walk by herself.

The first meal I made without assistance.
Wind blowing through my hair.

Strobes

Melissa Duarte

Sitting in the front row in the O2,
the *All-American Rejects* sing
Dirty Little Secrets, out loud.

The guitarist slices through lights,
I feel the drum beat in my chest,
smell the sweat and smoke around me.

Taste freedom as I sing along,
The *All-American Rejects*
are my band. My safe zone.

Folkmore

Melissa Duarte

Life was joyful and peaceful,
I sat on the red chair,
exchanged a glance with the deep
blue sky. The wonders
of nature, the wind came roaring
down and I sang Folkmore,
near the deep orange fire.

The Keyhouse in My Mind

Melissa Duarte

I am a flag on the lighthouse,
the strand beside the sea.

I am waves, I am sweet
refreshing cup of tea.

I am deep coral minty leaf
who casts amongst

the little seeds.

I am harmless bee.

Play

Melissa Duarte

The shrieks and laughter of little children,
the taste of vanilla ice-cream
on a hot summer day.

Like something you'd want to keep
a tight grasp on
forever.

A game of hide and seek,
sweet, almost as sweet
as honey.

The Library

Melissa Duarte

Each book
is where
our story begins.

Memory

Melissa Duarte

Roasted marshmallows and pumpkin soup,
decorated houses, bright, colourful,
shrieks of joy, chocolate and candy in a variety
of flavours. Walking down the lane
trick or treating with my cousins, going
home with an endless supply of candy.

A Hushed Prayer

Melissa Duarte

I see a hand like a weathered root,
reaching for hope, however mute.
The scent of rain on a sun-baked street,
where concrete and weary shadows meet.
This rough paper edge of my final giving.

Saint Paddy's Day

Melissa Duarte

The sky is the colour of old concrete
and the drizzle soaks up through our feet.

The bands play and march down St. Patrick Street,
puddles splash around our legs.

Lashing rain, truth be told,
we stand out in the damp and cold.

But with flags held high and spirits
bold, the rebel city cheers.

How wonderful to see everyone unite.
I want to capture that classic Cork resilience,

soft weather is just part of this day
of freedom on the banks of the River Lee.

Nana's Cookbook

Melissa Duarte

She always had a smile on her face,
it was as if she had a spark,
her golden eyes, her presence, a grace.

The aroma from her kitchen never fades.
She passed down a book; her recipe
for her golden, crispy potatoes.

I eat them on rainy days.

The Soft Horizon

Melissa Duarte

The day begins to fold its light
into ribbons of amber, pink and gold.
A quiet breath before the night
as stories of the day are told.
The grass holds dew, the trees
against the sky, so wide and free.

Moments of peace within it all,
and everything I hope to be.
No wish, no noise, just open space
where shadows stretch and colours blend.
I find my rhythm and my place,
before this gentle evening's end.

The Glass Witnesses in Israel

Melissa Duarte

It sits with certain gravity
a weight of glass and gears

waiting for the frantic rush
of the world to steady, align.

Through the viewfinder
the war between light and shadow

is settled in a fraction
of a second – a quiet truce.

There is fleeting panic
as the shutters click,

a fear that the moment
might slip. The past un-held.

But the mirror flips
and chaos is distilled,

sharper than lemonade,
more enduring than sugar on my tongue.

This frame now holds the phantom
sting of citrus, the grainy

residue of a morning spent
in a melee of flowers.

It is a save button
for the mind's weary eye,

captures the laughter
that hung thick in the air,

before the gold dipped low
and the day was done.

For a while the war
of years may change a face,

the glass witness preserves
this sacred messy space

and saves the heartbeats
that would otherwise cease.

London's Rooftop Reach

Melissa Duarte

A skyline stretched beneath the blue
where a city hums and clouds drift through
from rooftop heights, the world feels wide
with silver rails and streets to guide.

A distant tower stands tall and bright,
catching the glow of fading light.
The busy town in quiet rest.
A golden view, the very best.

The roots of now, the making of me.
A scrapbook of smiles and tiny feet.
Each golden moment makes life complete.
A bridge to the past, where it all began,

holding the heart of the person I am.

Home Town

Ciarán Hawkins

I am the tradition of the city
I am the cool breeze through Bell's Field
I am the lights of the North Cathedral
I am the statue of Father Matthew
I am the bells that ring from Shandon
I am as tall as the tip of Shandon
I am as strong as the city hall
I am the memories of my grandmother's stall in the Corn Market
I am the hurley Christy Ring once held
I am the pride of the Northside.

In My Grandmother's House

Ciarán Hawkins

The Celtic design on the lid shows me
that this box has a history,

the pearl inlay in the corner,
the same colour as her earrings,

the owl above is protective
of what is inside: a gold chain,

each link a memory intertwined.

Nookie

Ciarán Hawkins

I called you Nookie, because I couldn't pronounce
Granny Hawkins when I was a toddler.

Today on the Coal Quay, I was passing the belt shop,
out of the corner of my eye I saw a big sign:

Welcome to the Cornmarket

and in the background a photograph of you

leaning against your stall, looking to the right
at something or someone, the sun in your eyes,

people pass by
and one of them takes your photograph.

The first time I ever saw that photo of you,
well-loved in this city that I love.

At your funeral, following the hearse, my father
looked back at the procession stretching for miles

Desire Path

Ciarán Hawkins

To play a gig in Cork,
Páirc Uí Chaoimh perhaps,

centre stage, red and white lights,
a banner behind me with the crest:

a blue ship coming in on waves,
the north and south wall on either side.

My family in the audience,
sing along to a song that I wrote

about where we're from:
The Glen, where my life began.

Strawberry Fields Forever

Sam Blackshields

I love the layers that the Beatles incorporated into the song.
They use different variations and instruments from other cultures:

Sitar and Slide guitar, also a moog – a synthesizer
at the start of the song which gives it a tropical vibe.

The creative choices they made are inspiring
and motivate me to experiment with my own music.

Campfire

Sam Blackshields

I lit a fire under the moonlit sky,
the crashing waves from the ocean

made me look back,
reflect on my life.

Forgiveness: tastes like salt,
and the softness of a silk pillow.

Forgiveness is the sound of Shandon bells.

Cork

Sam Blackshields

The smell of the carvery at Murphy's Rock,
the taste of roast beef.

The salmon atop Shandon, swims in the sky,
the cold wind is sharp, from the Lee.

The Opera House asleep during the day,
alive at night, music flooding through glass.

Walking Stick

Calum Colohan

The handle is like a bone
and shaped like a phoenix rising.

The twirly design of the stick
reminds me of ice-cream
swirling from a machine
in the ice-cream van.

The Holy Stone

Calum Colohan

The colour of this stone
is like a fresh morning sky.

It feels like nothing I've felt
before, each stone is unique.

This stone has been to LA, Liverpool,
France. When I study the markings,

I imagine its history, how many
lives it outlived. It will outlive me.

With a Little Help from my Friends

Calum Colohan

I like this song, it sounds like the singing of angels,
reminds me of Summertime and the warm air that comes with it.
It makes me feel Joyful and excited.
The instrumental makes me want to get up and dance
The rhythm makes me feel alive.

My Song Book

Calum Colohan

is full of songs,
some short,
some long

each song tells a story,
none of the stories are boring,
the melodies could make a desert cry.



The Unfinished Book of Poetry 2026

featuring poems by

Amélie Thomas
Falak Hidayah
Alex O'Sullivan
Yaz Bouketta
Max Day
Nina Kershaw
David Deasy Rubio
Elsie O'Regan
Grace Fitton
Ava Corcoran
Maya Zuhaira
Fizza Tauseef
Rose McCarthy
Aoibhe Delaney
Uelle San Juan
Mara Noppeney

Ami Hurley
Matthew Leahy
Aoibhe Lacey
Mia Hurley
Rachel Ní Shúilleabháin
Cian Ó Luasaigh
Jodie Ní Mhuirthile
Leah Ní Chonghaile
Lena Kowalczyk
Amy McCarthy
Victoria Makinde
Melissa Duarte
Ciaran Hawkins
Samuel Blackshields
Calum Colohan



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