FUTURE PERFECT

Fifty Award-Winning Poems Selected from Entries to the Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competitions 2012–2019

Edited by Mary Shine Thompson
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POETRY IRELAND/TRÓCAIRE
2019
Previous Trócaire
and Poetry Ireland
Competition Publications

- *Imagining a Just and Free World* 2012
- *Today’s Children, Tomorrow’s World* 2013
- *It’s Up to Us* 2014
- *Feeling the Heat* 2015
- *Forced to Flee* 2016
- *Before the Storm* 2017
- *Until Love Conquers Fear* 2018
- *Land is Life* 2019

*Future Perfect: Fifty Award-Winning Poems
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Poetry Competitions 2012–2019*

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The Trócaire/Poetry Ireland competition is an important event in Ireland’s literary calendar, bringing together the voices of new and emerging poets, including some as young as eight years old, with those of established and distinguished writers. It is a competition that takes place in an egalitarian and democratic space, inviting participants to capture some of those singular moments of revelation or insight that speak profoundly of the shared humanity that connects us all.

That is such an imaginative challenge and I am delighted to know that many thousands of poets have responded since the inception of the Trócaire/Poetry Ireland competition in 2012. This volume brings together an inspiring selection of some of the best of those responses. In doing so it also brings together, in a spirit of shared community and solidarity, the voices of a wide range of talented writers. The voices contained within these pages are distinct and individual, but the writing is unfailingly striking and beautiful.

I would like to congratulate all of the poets who have contributed to this anthology and, in doing so, have offered us work that is not only enriching and exciting, but a profound reminder of the principles and values of human rights and human dignity that are denied to so many with whom we share this vulnerable planet.

Michael D. Higgins
Uachtaráin na hÉireann
President of Ireland
Foreword

Sarah Crossan
Laureate na nÓg (2018–2020)

Poetry belongs to everyone. This is the message I bring to the young people I meet on my travels as Laureate na nÓg. There is a perception that poetry belongs to academics, or to rich people, or to white people, or to men. In short, there is a perception out there that poetry is written in the language of privilege. We must dismantle this myth and reclaim poetry, because it belongs to every one of us, no matter how disadvantaged or difficult our circumstances. I believe that poetry is transformative. It has the power to change lives.

The Trócaire/Poetry Ireland annual poetry competition recognises that creativity can fuel change, attitudinal change, which is the most important change of all. We are living in strange and unstable times, where social injustice is so prevalent it is in danger of becoming normalised. Political rhetoric speaks to our children of borders and ethnicity, of otherness. And amid all of this our common humanity is forgotten.

Yet, there is hope. Within the pages of this anthology it is clear that our children and young people will challenge this dangerous consensus, that they will use their creative voices, their poetry, to compose a counter narrative. The poetry in this collection calls for a world where social justice, human rights, and our natural environment are valued. As one primary school-aged poet so beautifully puts it: ‘Love grows in the heart of the earth’.

Initiatives like the Trócaire/Poetry Ireland competition are essential. Young people must be allowed to express their creativity without fear of censure or ridicule. Article 31 of the United National Convention on the Rights of the Child states that each child has the right ‘to participate freely in cultural life and the arts’. It is one of the key aims of Laureate na nÓg to introduce quality literature to all children and young people in Ireland. We do this in the knowledge that children from underprivileged backgrounds are less likely to participate in arts and cultural activities than children from affluent families. We must strive to be more inclusive, and it is heartening that this collection features such a varied mix of girls and boys, of Irish speakers and English speakers, and of Irish children whose heritage is from different parts of the world.

Within these pages you’ll find eight poets of primary-school age and thirteen post-primary poets. Their work appears alongside that of adult poets, including some well established and recognisable names. To be placed on a par with older writers can only encourage these young people to make their voices heard. They are the thread that connects history to the future, and we have much to learn from them.

Each and every one of the twenty-one poems written by schoolchildren in this book has left a lasting impression on me. I’m optimistic our future is in safe hands, and have no doubt that we will hear from these young writers again. They have important things to say. They are the poets.
Introduction

Mary Shine Thompson

Land is life: yet millions are forced to flee daily before the ravages of storms and heat waves that we have all had a hand in making. It is up to us, therefore, to forge a better future; to imagine a just and free world for tomorrow’s children, a world in which love conquers fear, and the life-giving earth is cherished.
Poetry has the capacity to do that: to conjure tomorrow’s world for tomorrow’s children.
—Themes of Poetry Ireland/Trócaire poetry competitions 2012–19

In 2011, Poetry Ireland, the national organisation for poetry in Ireland, and Trócaire, the overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland, combined their resources to create a poetry competition.

What if, they thought, they invited poets, young and old, published and unpublished, to address those global issues that created vast wastelands of inequity? Would the resources of poetry – its controlled passion, its pursuit of the beautiful, and the vigorous intellect that go into its making – inspire serious and insightful engagement? Would poets’ best fighting words and measured music not only indelibly imprint on our consciousness the vulnerability of people in developing regions, but also compel us to respond to the global challenge?

Poetry is, after all, a paragon of politics, of people using their heartfelt resources to swing the needles of power positively towards distant horizons: in its own right poetry is a magnet of energy and action and defiance. As Laureate na nÓg Sarah Crossan has put it so succinctly in her foreword to this anthology, poetry belongs to everyone.

And so a plan was fleshed out between Poetry Ireland and Trócaire. Poets at all stages of development, whether they were celebrated or still awaiting print, were invited to respond to salient, serious themes. School goers were extended a separate invitation. Senior and junior post-primary students, and even pupils in junior and upper primary classes, young people who were still finding their poetic voices, were also invited to compete. The level of experience and craftsmanship of these young people and their age were taken into account when their poems were being assessed.

The first competition was launched in 2011, and poets and poets-in-the-making have submitted poems on challenging themes annually since then.

As Poetry Ireland and Trócaire hoped, the annual competitions seized the poetic public’s imagination. Thousands of submissions flowed in. Each year and each theme brought another spring tide of poetic riches. The organisers published and promoted winning poems in annual booklets, starting in 2012. The booklets were entitled Imagining a Just and Free World (2012); Today’s Children, Tomorrow’s World (2013); It’s Up to Us (2014); Feeling the Heat (2015); Forced to Flee (2016); Before the Storm (2017); Until Love Conquers Fear (2018); and Land is Life (2019).

The first of these themed competitions enjoined poets to imagine a just and free world. In the years that followed, the poets were urged to envisage today’s children and tomorrow’s world. They addressed subject matter relating to global warming as well as to extreme weather events and the forced migration that ensues. Most recently, themes focused on the need both to conserve resources and to show solidarity with sufferers.

The inspiration for the anthology’s title, Future Perfect, comes from David Butler’s poem on page 38, ‘Before the Storm’. In this poem he imagines ‘... An instant, where future imperfect / appears to hang in the balance’. This book seeks to tip the scales towards a future that aspires to be perfect. In grammar, the future perfect tense signifies an action that will be completed at some specifiable point. So in
an imaginative sense, the ‘future perfect’ of this anthology’s title
denotes hope, but accommodates irony.

All the poems in this anthology were either prize winners or runners
up in their respective competitions. This anthology assembles a
small selection, winnowed from the winning and shortlisted poems
of those eight years; just over one in three, in fact. Every one of the
chosen submissions encapsulates something of the soul of poetry,
and its capacity for complex meaning.

The decisions on the final selection and on the editing process, which
were left entirely to the editor’s discretion, were not taken lightly.

Although some of the poets included in this anthology won more
than one prize in the eight years of the Trócaire/Poetry Ireland
Competitions, only one entry per poet has been chosen for this book.
In numerical terms, the poems chosen favour female poets, and that
reflects the the gender distribution of the entries. The number of
Irish-language entries is also fewer than the number in English over
the term of the competition.

What is certain, however, is that taken together the chosen poems
harbour memorable qualities: some express honest emotion
expressed in finely tuned phrases. Others possess a haunting
image; a melodic character; an idiosyncratic insight; or perhaps
an eye for form. Some grapple with the tragedy of existence, or
some indefinable, mysterious trait. Some are playful. Not all of the
poems are equally achieved, but that is hardly surprising, given
that some of the entrants were as young as eight or nine years old
when they braved the competition. Nonetheless, all of the poems
in some way offer the reader ample recompense. Every one leaves
a polished pebble on the shore, a reason to believe that love can
indeed conquer fear.

The accomplishment of poems like Geraldine Mitchell’s ‘Basso
Continuo’, or ‘Slow Dancing in a Burning Room’ by Afric
McGlinchey, or Caolinn Hughes’s ‘Bolivian Children’ – and many
others in the adult categories – may not come as a surprise, though
it does delight. These poets have already honed their reputations,
and indeed many have gone on to gain further distinction since
the Poetry Ireland/Trócaire competition recognised their craft.
However, the exhilarating abundant richness of the anthology really
only becomes apparent when it is read, and reread, as a whole.

A handful of shards drawn from the verses will intimate some of
their technical achievements and their impact. John Donaghy’s
quirky title word ‘Ainganiff’, for example, surely piques interest, and
delivers rich, complex meaning. (The reader must go to the poem to
unpack it.) The refrains of John Dunne (‘We are going’) and Dairena
Ni Chinnéide (who repeats ‘lorg’ in ‘Buille na Trócaire’) are devices
put to work to stirring effect. A young poet like Luke Morgan
visually enacts the notion of fracture by jagging his formatting in his
poem ‘Atlas’: he hyphenates and spreads one simple word, ‘parts’,
over two lines (‘pa-/ parts’). Eleven-year-old Matthew Brigdale wittily
creates a top-hat cloud as portent of a serious storm. Young Fionn
McGibney’s stark final line, ‘Fear, I forgive you’, sets the standard
for human action.

There is indeed much more to savour in this anthology.

The eight sections in which the poems are placed reflect the eight
years of the competition and their associated themes, which are
captured in the competition titles. The sections are sequenced to
create a narrative in which environmental disasters give rise to
forced migration, and in which the gilded developed world must
create imaginative, courageous responses based on agency, empathy
– and on a belief in love’s capacity to conquer fear.

The poems and the thematic sections in which they are placed in
themselves create a myriad of compelling, rewarding narratives.
The interplay of the Irish and English languages creates its own
conversation. The inclusion of a poem by a young Zimbabwean,
gleaned from the 2013 competition, in which a group of his
fellow Zimbabweans were allocated their own section, testifies to
further diversity. One poet deviates from punctuation norms, but is
consistent in her approach. Diversity takes many forms.
The poems are presented without reference to the age or level of schooling of the young (or indeed adult) poets, although some biographical details may be found in the notes at the end of the anthology. Details such as the poets’ ages, the category to which their poems belong, whether Adult Published, Adult Non-Published, Post-Primary Senior, Post-Primary Junior, Primary Senior or Primary Junior, do not form part of the dialogue between the poems. The poems take the stage alone, without explanation or excuse.

Trócaire and Poetry Ireland are honoured and proud that the President of Ireland, an tUachtarán Michael D. Higgins, himself a poet, has warmly endorsed *Future Perfect* in his message on page 8. The foreword to the book written by Sarah Crossan, Laureate na nÓg (2018–2020), is a further enthusiastic commendation not only of the poems included in this anthology, but also the values that underpin it.

An especially warm word of thanks is due both to the entire teams of Poetry Ireland and of Trócaire for their support and their unswerving commitment to this anthology and for their attention to detail. In particular, Moira Cardiff, Patricia Groves and Dr Jane O’Hanlon have devoted many precious hours to the project.

The poets in this anthology have taken the chaos of what happens and reclaimed it as the music of what happens. Their words signify our hope for a finer future.
GENEALOGY

Cliona O’Connell

Most of the 7 billion of us alive today are descended from a tiny handful of people, the population of a village.
—Adam Rutherford, A Brief History of Everyone Who Ever Lived.

They share plots from their clutter-bags of facts: births, marriages, deaths, what age would he be now, who she married or how many children.

This is how we track the seed and breed of it. It disappears at the edge of remembrance into the mist, a famine ship. Still, I follow heartwood and pith of my maternal line,

a branch of the Fitzgerald tree, rolling out the rings of history wide enough to discover that the Mona Lisa and I have common ancestry: the Gherardinis of Tuscany,

whose Florentine knights travelled north to Normandy in 1056, battled in Hastings in ’66 and whose descendants were later lured to Ireland by the King of Leinster. Now unfold further the Book of Invasions: six times taken, ending with the Milesians. Whether myth or datum from seas Red or Caspian, the evidence of exodus and expatriation are the skulls and fossils of our journeys that catch where the train slows crossing the border from Monte Carlo,

bougainvillea growing wild, travelling the tracks like an emblem of this life, these ties, to the swarming crowds flogging fake merchandise at the station in Ventimiglia:

kin who have carried their lives in black nylon sacks from North Africa.
HOME

Hannah Murphy

The boy keeps the key in his back pocket;
The key that has seen war in winter,
Arms in autumn, soldiers in spring, sorrow in summer,
While the eye of the door lock
Has watched neighbours die before children
As sand is sent scattering around them,
Exploding into the windows of a widow –
The lock lost in rubble,
Among bullets, blood and burnt-down buildings.
Hope lies within the key,
So that one day a battered boy
May return to a home in pieces
And finally feel at peace.

SHELL-SHOCKED LAND

Helen Fallon

Birdsong dies in poisoned skies,
blowouts shatter pipelines, etch toxic wounds on soft skin.
Drills punch holes in ancient earth,
extract oil,
down.

Pipelines and pumps crisscross villages.
Protest cries drowned by thump of heavy-booted soldiers.
They stomp on crops, shatter canoes, homes and lives.

In air-conditioned corporate boardrooms,
suited men in swivel chairs sip ice-cubed, filtered water,
study rising oil prices, zig-zag green and orange graphs,
deny their destruction of the Niger Delta.
i don’t know this land.
the barren deserted ground i walk is unfamiliar, unrecognizable.
my cries are drowned out by every shot of gun, hope cascading
into the fountains of my youth and drowning.
my roots are dying, my heritage forgotten.
where are my people? have they been destroyed by some
godforsaken militia? did the men in suits become greedy again?
perhaps my people left. the hurt i feel is immeasurable.
i am hungry for change.

‘let me nourish you,’ she says. she waters me,
watching me grow and stretch as tall as my ancestors once were.
her kind face smiles from east to west. she plucks from me
the food her starving saplings demand. just as i have grown,
their roots, their lineage, grow and stretch,
breaking this soft clay. soldiers cannot fight on broken ground. let
them return. let them shed their sorrows and plant a
seed of hope. i thank artemis. i will give to her what
she gives to me: a life, a soul, a purpose.

Nur holds land, knows its memories,
digs her hands into its cool belly,
pulling out, then sowing life.
Land holds Nur, feels her temperament, her song.
Together they dance through the seasons,
cheek to cheek.
First there are whisperings,
then discordant songs
from a crowd that wasn’t invited.
They uproot Nur and land
until both are spinning and
the background is blurring.
Neither knows who’s holding whom anymore.
Land is left.
Nur leaves and somehow is left too.
Waves jostle her further into space,
and displacement, once a distant song,
now is on repeat.
Movement, movement.
New unfamiliar lands,
where people cannot separate her
from the word ‘other’.
Old land visits in her dreams.
But it is Spring and life is starting again.
Nur digs, feels somewhere
the land is in her, and people dig too;
feel the way the world holds
the words ‘land’, ‘my troubles’, ‘yours’
is changing, and a new song is starting,
and the dance has begun.

*Nur* is an Arabic name meaning ‘light’
THE KERCHIEF
Christine Broe

Resting at the border
she brushed the earth from her feet,
collected it in an old kerchief.

And while her sons slept,
she scraped the soil from their sandal soles;
this too she added to her treasure.

She coaxed the river mud from between the toes
of the little ones who twitched in their slumbers,
dreaming perhaps of tickles.

The other women, sensing her mission,
combed the travel dust from their long hair,
brushed it from their clothes, gifted it to her.

So light and heavy in her hands she held
the earth and airborne essence of their land,
and she tied it in a bundle,

hung it like a third breast on her chest.
Taking her homeland with her
when morning came, they crossed the border

and she imagined that the apple pip she sucked
might be the first seed she would plant
in this bag of heavy loss.

BEO
Seán Ó Raghaillaigh

Pian i mo bholg,
Gan bhia, gan bhriónglóid.
Gach nóiméad an rud céanna.
Cé atá ag éisteacht?

Pian i mo cheann,
Gan bhia, gan bhriónglóid.
Gach uair an rud céanna.
Cé atá ag féachaint?

Pian i mo láthair,
Gan bhia, gan bhriónglóid.
Gach lá an rud céanna.
Cé atá cabhrach?

Pian i mo chosa,
Gan bhia, gan bhriónglóid,
Gach seachtain an rud céanna.
Cé atá úsáideach?

Pian i mo scámhóga,
Gan bhia, gan bhriónglóid,
Gach mí an rud céanna.
Cé atá fiosrach?

Pian i mo chroí,
Le mála agus ticéad,
Tír eile, thar lear.
Anois tuigim cé atá freagrach.
There are two windows in my life,
The one I left behind and the one I choose to dislike.
I loved the view from my bedroom window.
It showed my whole village
With its farms and people,
Shops and school.
It showed me
Everything.

The window I am looking out now
Contains the view of a dark and angry ocean
With its waves and their dancing.

With my wet eyes I am searching for dry land.
CAST AWAY

Nicki Griffin

She cries each night in the dark of the tent, not because she’s cold and dismayed, though she is;
not because she fears to eat alien flavours doled out from canvassed kitchens, though she does;
not because mud grabs her feet, makes her think of devils holding fast, pulling her underground, though it does;
she cries for the goat we left behind, which she loved, whose milk she drank in the slant of the morning sun.
THE MOUNTAIN OF BUTTERFLIES
Angela T. Carr

...swirled through the air like autumn leaves and carpeted the ground in their flaming myriads.
— Fred Urquhart

They arrive with the corn and the Dia de los Muertos – one billion butterflies – the souls of the ancestors returning. Discovered in the Sierra Madres, the border of Michoacán, the Monarch’s winter ground, ten thousand feet up in Cerro Pelon. The Mazahua greet the dead with church processions, altars piled high with offerings: fruit and sweet breads; they eat their ghostly fill and sleep, wake at Mardi Gras – corporeal and ablaze – clamour the grey-green oyamel trees, dance in the sun; by night, they cluster to conserve heat, in thickets so dense, from a distance, the woods bleed orange. Exodus in spring – begin the two and a half thousand miles to a land their grandchildren will call home; follow the milkweed north, a storm of wings that fills the ears like rain.

UNTOS ME IS THE JOURNEYING
Mairead Donnellan

Unto me is the journeying.
— Quran (31:14)

Baba, my feet are not far off filling your shoes. Mama says a man taken from his bed has no more need for them. I am to stop watching the door, laying your place at the table. I must take your blade and shave the shadow from my upper lip. She wraps me in too many clothes, deep winter coat, your cinnamon scarf, closes our door on the hot smell of bread. My satchel is fat with loaves, a guide to butterflies I took from your bookcase.

Mama says this is not the time for butterflies so I leave them to sleep between the pages. I have to stand straight, look ahead, meet the eyes of strangers. On the quiet night road I look for you amongst the men without sons on their shoulders. We move in the wake of their breath. Deadwood fires coax us on; the coast, always just beyond the next camp, a few more miles to go, raw, weeping, filling your shoes. Baba, my feet are not far off.
DRIFTING

Romy Fehily

The rescue boat came slowly in,
Behind it a battered dingy,
In it laid sombre shawls
That once hung on women’s shoulders,
Torn chequered head scarves
That once covered the heads of men
And tiny sodden sandals
Which children once wore and played in,
Now without an owner,
The personal possessions drift.
A little Moses cradle was placed carefully at the rear,
A baby lay sleeping,
Snuggled up warm, cosy and pink,
Dressed for the voyage of promise,
But no one there to care.

WASTELANDS

Kate Doheny/Kate Ní Dhubhchonna

Their disbelieving mouths hang
From dusty faces
As our grass-stained lips
Once sunk between hollow cheeks;
Their terror-filled screams
Agitate the ashy air
As our desperate cries
Once lifted from hungry fields;
Their treacherous boats
Sacrifice their loved ones to the sea
As our damned coffin ships
Once did;
Their undying hunger for safety
As strong
As ours once was
For food.
These tragic coincidences
Haunt our memory,
With one vital difference:
Our blight was one of potatoes;
Thiers is one of men.
A sickness of the senses,
A sickness of the soul.
THIS IS OUR JOURNEY THROUGH THE NIGHT

John Dunne

War came without us knowing.
War came and took over.

We are going.
We are going because we have no choice.
We are going for a new life.

War came without us knowing.
War came and took over.

The gunshots are still firing.
The smoke is in the night air.
The boat awaits us on the tide.

War came without us knowing.
War came and took over.

I look at my mother and father.
I see fear in their eyes.
I feel how they hold me tight.

War came without us knowing.
War came and took over.

This is our exodus.
This is our one hope.
This is our journey through the night.
The top-hat cloud flew right
down the cobbled roads.
People watched in wonder as it flew with grace
over the brightly painted rooftop,
through the bustling, hustling market.
But the top-hat cloud did not stop.
Some tried to roll it over.
But the top-hat cloud just winked his eye
and said ‘Not today, folks.
I’m going to my village in the sky.’
Up and up, over the setting sun,
through the clouds.
I saw today the top-hat cloud.
BEFORE THE STORM

David Butler

There is a moment before the storm when the winds hold their breath, the boughs stop moving, the cloud, backlit, is photograph-still, the lake’s meniscus reverent. A moment in suspense, an instant, where future imperfect appears to hang in the balance, when the dice have yet to fall, the first, fat drops to explode in the dust-tormented earth.

SIGNS

Lorraine Carey

Sea-swell surges, urges them ashore, dotted in fields, plodding clay. Terns and gulls wrench worms in the lull before the squall. Between squawks and screeches, they congregate, their rushed spate instinctive, reactive to subtle changes in the air. Trawlers retreat, return to port, moor along harbour walls, the waterlines markers of a moon’s cycle, as they dip, climb and fall. Bollards wound with weathered ropes and breadline hopes of anxious crew in oilskins, tethered to the sea’s call. Harbours fill up with vessels and impatient skippers, taking heed from shipping forecasts. Sheep decamp to lower ground, a helter-skelter of muddied path grooved with cloven hooves, seeking shelter in the huddle, in the glare of open fields. Brambles and thistle border ditches as the wind whistles, weaves through briars, swaying once taut telegraph wires below the storm cloud cluster, and darkness tumbles in.
THE HURRICANE

Bernie Crawford

Sat still
over the island
for seven days,

She kept watch;
didn’t close her eyes

As she braided her daughter’s hair,
creamed her skin from the big jar
of cocoa balm until it glistened;

As she sliced plantains,
fried them in corn oil,
smacked tortillas flat
between her palms;

As she washed
the blue enamel ware
in the yellow plastic basin,
wiped clean the red poppies
on the formica table;

As she smoothed Mayan weaves
over foam mattresses,
swept sand from the room
with the short-handled broom.

Afterwards,
four stumps of walls
and the busy emptiness of hands
that longed to hold a daughter
and braid her hair once more
into corn rows.

ELEGY

Michael Ray

...and I wait by the shore watching the horizon’s blue limit.
— Juan Ramón Molina

The rains fall, the rains fall and the moon
pulls tides like a slave. My youngest, Alma,
she knows how it all works, and says leaving
will become a habit. The sky here is cracked;
what issues cannot change its mind.

We could pray to our stone ancestors
in the mountains. But behind us, the wind
is a hungry jaguar. Loris, my eldest,
he says that over the water there are countries
made of glass and dust, and experts talking.

The ocean is gathering itself again.
I ask my children to ready for the storm.
We watch Juan, our neighbour, row
across his field; a train of clouds shunts
overhead, like veiled and watery accords.
HURRICANE
Jake Kilcoyne Kellegher

A hot, heavy weight rests in the air.
Thick and humid, it clings to the tongue
With each tentative breath.
All around you people prepare,
Gathering food, water, and anything that might help.
For it is coming.
Through the hustle and bustle and heat and light
You can feel it
Tingling gently on your skin.
Static ripples excitedly over the worn fabric of your shirt.
The sky darkens slowly on the horizon;
A hush descends on the crowd around you:
They know what it means.
Death,
Hunger,
Loss,
Destruction.
A storm is coming.

AG FANACHT LEIS AN STOIRM
Muireann Ní Éideáin

An charraig agus an fharraige fágtha.
Gan smaointeamh orainne –
Na daoine a stróic é
Mar bhurat san fhuacht,
San oíche dhubh, mar tháipéis,
Gan réalt ann, mar a bheadh bradán gléigeal,
D’fhian mé mar pháirt de,
Mar leothne gaoithe,
Agus thuig mé ansin
Narbh fhéadfaí é a stopadh
Gan cumhacht na gaoithe aniar
I mo thimpeall.
THE MONSTER IN THE SKY

Catherine Coen

It shrieks and screams and bangs its drums,
Often wailing an unearthly cry.
It’s a dark, purple, angry thing,
The monster in the sky.

Its bright sword stabs
With a cruel delight,
Its sharp laugh tearing
Through the silence of the night.

The sea and sky battle
In a never-ending feud,
While all those below dread
Their terror renewed.

HOW TO SURVIVE A STORM

Adam Cooper

Thunder flourishes; how ghastly the sound!
Like a thousand angry wheelie bins
Gliding across uneven ground.
A boy hugs a piece of paper to his chest
Like a blanket that keeps him warm.
The leaflet, old and tattered says:
‘How to survive a storm.’
It came to him as part of a magazine,
In a box once meant for shoes,
Accompanied by a bag of jellies and some rub-on tattoos.

As the storm flirts with the horizon,
The wind and the rain are waltzing outside,
Celebrating its arrival.
‘Board the windows, turn off utilities.
Stock up on water, food and batteries.
Find a space in your home and build a safe room.’
Steps committed to memory but never given form,
For there are no windows to board, no food or water to hoard.
So, a boy shivers in the cold,
Hugging the belief that a piece of paper would keep him safe.
But nothing could.
Not in a house that could barely withstand footsteps,
Let alone a storm.
If I follow the carbon footpath
to a future memory,
I find you, lean and supple
though you blur a little.
That’s because I’m pushing
my heart against you, and my eyes
are mostly closed to the squinting,
Bouncing dark. It’s the unknown
of the known that attracts us.
We move blindly around the room,
among the uninvited ones,
and I drink you in as though
through a straw,
slowly, sucking deeply.

The others have departed
to be Martians, low gravity
a safer bet than burning.
The doors, back and front,
are still open, and the yellowwood
floor is glowing. Do we dim
or brighten, before the sirens blare?
MARKING TIME
Ann Joyce

She flips back loose wisps of hair, 
wants further each day in search of water, 
drifts into land assaulted by sun. 
Her feet burn from the hot earth.

She picks up a handful of dust, watches it fall through fingers, asks herself whether rain might ever again remember how to fall. 
What she owns now is memory,

kneeeepdeep in the river, the splash of water pulsing through her body like early love, going out into the night-scent of wet earth, ripening yams, swelling maize.

She side-steps past dried-out river beds, past gullies that have lost their voice, listens to thrumming rain-drums invoking cloud gods.

Waves of heat lift her. 
She is carried by water-scented wind, carried and let fall into puddles of mud, rocked in an empty boat of territory

that moulded her, that holds her in its clasp even as the desert moves closer. 
She walks further into the future, her feet heavy with need and want and heat.

OUR MISTAKE
Elise Carey-McGibney

Splendid trees sway in a tropical breeze. 
Birds like rainbows squawk their warnings 
High on branches, gathering like a flower garden. 
Their noisy beaks talk of global warming.

Burnt grass lines the crusty fields. 
Wrens and robins seek out hedgerows, 
Sheltering from the sweltering heat. 
One by one drop the weakened crows.

Oil spills, leaving layers on the ocean, 
A cormorant’s wings no use anymore, 
His ebony feathers blue and green 
As he slowly drifts away on the disgraced shore.
INUIT
Maurice Devitt

His parents told him stories of the moon,
how in summer it would be starved by the sun,
grow skinny, until only a crescent survived;

but in winter, the sprightly moon could run rings
around the sun and, as the sky darkened,
the snow would forget to melt.

This was how it was when he was young,
and now, every year, he builds
his igloo closer to the Pole, tip-toes

in snow-shoes across the tightening
cling-film of ice, hunts for sea
with a lighter sled and heavier mind,

wonders what stories he can tell
his children that even he could believe.

BUILLE NA TRÓCAIRE
Dairena Ní Chinnéide

Tá na déithe ar buille
is an fharraige ina rabharta,
racht feirge ón ngréin
is ár gcrainn ag caoineadh:
lorg gaise ag cothú raic.

Tá Manannán éirithe chuige féin
le tuilte dearga fairsinge;
tá Anyanwo téite ón ngréin
agus Áine ag caoineadh:
lorg an fhéir dóite.

Tá tonnta teasa marfacha
ag idiú ó n-áitribh fharraige,
an bháisteach ag clagarnach
gan stop gan coinne, is sinn ag caoineadh:
lorg ár niompar carbónach.

Tá sé in am do choigilt fuinnimh
chun na déithe a chiúinú,
is ár gcóillte i ndeireadh an áil –
'siad na boicht a chaoineann:
lorg ár bpaidreacha ar fán.

Tá an feirmeoir sa ghort teanntaithe
ag cóirthuathail an ghorta,
macallaí ó shrutháin uisce
ag caoineadh ragairne is raidhse:
lorg ár n-easpa trócaire ar lár.
THE ANARCHIST
Emma Tobin

Let me manage this mischief with my two wrong feet
Bright miser’s eyes
Light twiddling fingers

I was born to break pencils and shake foundations
To tune the wise words out
Listen to my furiously beating heart

I was born to look away from the sun when it rises
Big brother watching me
The straw in a stack of needles

Sucking up the silence like they guzzle up your life
And tie you in a bundle of paper notes
They make you happier than freedom ever will

I was born to shed my wings and slither into my snakeskin
Watch the world crumble
Like chocolate biscuits

I clench my fists the crumbs crumble through the white knuckles
And watch as you nod along
Write between the lines

I was born so I could die on a cross with its head lobbed off
Stand in the rain
And bleed into the gutter

I was born to be a rebel and scream into the silence
Burst into light
Trace the contours of eternity
I am the boy in the hoodie I am the deep roller
I break apart on the road
And the cars peck at me

I am a fool in a world of sensible men
With sensible rules
I am the idealist

I am the anarchist
I was born to die
On the altar
Of progress.

THE WALNUT DRESSER

Wilma Kenny

The walnut dresser, a wedding
gift, stands tall and strong and beautiful
as the day it came to you, my mother.

It is you who are fading as your
eyes empty and the papery
skin breaks and bleeds.
I tenderly rub cream into the cracks.
I don’t say a word as you
remember the good days and the
fine man you married.

He who will lift his fist
on a whim, leaving your
girls with nothing solid to hang onto
apart from the walnut dresser,
tall and strong and beautiful.
THE GLACIERS

Anthony Hegarty

And death shall have no dominion …
Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again.
— Dylan Thomas

I almost hear them go,
The growlers breaking off
Into the rising sea:
Chile’s Jorge Montt
Or Athabascar in the north.
They’ve shaped the awesome
Valleys of my world.
A boy in Borrowdale
And Esk,
An old man now in Maam
And Innagh.

They’ve made the way
My earth flows
From high bog, mere soakage,
A dialogue with cloud,
And then the sudden spring
Into all the frozen architecture
Of that now empty space,
The wide cathedralled space
That seems too large to hold me,
While the small stream swells,
A last turbulence
That finally falls and flows,
Flows to the full-fathomed sea.

I ride astride a dolphin’s back
Or deeper,
Deeper with pearled eyes,
Look up to greet
The dark brown gaze
Of one, last, white, bear.
VALLEY OF THE BIRCHES

Mary Turley-McGrath

For miles before they reached the place, they could smell it; a hideous stench that none remembered from before when they burned towns or hamlets; by now they knew the smell of Death. Young soldiers retched; others jeered, then swallowed the last dregs of vodka.

At dawn they trudged towards the line of ever-spreading smoke. The wintry sun wore the veil that belched endlessly so that now there was no horizon; just a hellish pall, even the fences were wrapped in it, the barbed wire impossible to cross.

The creatures appeared from huts like corpses animated by morning; they shuffled towards the fence, grinning weirdly, their bones ready to split their faces, their shaven heads as if the skin were about to vanish, leaving moving skulls in tattered rags.

The soldiers stopped; only a young one went on. They stretched their bony hands to his but he cried out remembering the day his mother returned from the gulag. He was six years old. The memory that plagued him, now made real; he fell to the ground.

TUBRID

Karen O’Connor

I dip my cup in the water watch the clear spring swim into the enamel: like a great tongue licking it clean, dousing it, letting the water flow out to gush amongst the rushes, baptising spawned salmon and eager tadpoles, out into the countryside, to pour itself into some unseen river — blessed are the fish who swim here.

Now it is my cup I let the light flow in and drink as though I have walked all day to reach this shore, have not stopped or slept or eaten, have carried on my back all that I own — my new-born child begging for milk.

The cold of the water startling as it makes its way through my tributaries, fills my lakes and corries, floods my wetlands, bubbling through to my skin. And I reach down, pick up my load and journey back amongst the non-believers, through the shanty towns, to the furthest point of nowhere, where I will give milk to my baby daughter, as though I am the well and I know only plenty.
It begins with a summer concert, wine. Red wine carmine on white linen, evening light. Schubert’s Quintet in C. One cellist know the score by heart, turns his head, sees concentric rings.

Pulse in every glass. That night he dreams: a field, Bright air, the absent smell of death. No flies, no sign the earth has been disturbed. He knows, yet he does not know he knows what lies below and why.

No movement but his bow, his elbow back and forth. Hoarse words hauled up, grim adagio. He sows a solemn beauty and moves on: another field, another town, another country. Around out only world and round again, concentric rings lapping the shores of every human heart.
SHADOWS

Kate Ellis

They tread silently
Behind us, unnoticed.
Never leaving us,
Watching our backs
Like friends.
With us as we grow,
Like souls.

ATLAS

Luke Morgan

I remember the sweet-shop colours –
Pakistan, vivid green,
yellow India next to it,
purple China
teal Russia
orange France –

I couldn’t decide
which one I liked the best.
I wanted to cut
them all out
and try
re-arranging
the jagged parts, but could I put them back
to the way they were? It would
take hours with a scissors and paste
and nothing would be left
for the next child to imagine.
BORN

Dean McHugh

Blind and a mother,
diamonds balance on the summit
of my cheeks, flood the worn ridge,
drown in their concave, salt to skin.

I can’t search
your pupils,
your two fat planets,
for the ghoul, the red
carved aesthetic, perhaps

your biggest maternal inheritance.
I’m a battlefront
knotted and made woman,
my own corporeal tension of history,

singing my lullabies
to the hereafter: tick, fever.
My new gravity, you will learn
your alphabet,

turn my globe.
My sum, my
howl to the earth,
you’re the world I hold in hope.

HISTORY OF THE WORLD

Clare O’Reilly

At a foot and a half, it was half as tall as me; peeping over the top, I
carefully carried my cargo to the next stop.
Dark green muslin covers wound tightly round its frame, oozed of
summer mildew.
I tightened my grip on either side, hugged it closer to my chest, heart
pumping with pride.
Entrusted with the Leabhar Rolla.
Our presence was requested, a summons
from our small frame wood and metal chairs.
One by one we chanted the ritual prayer
Anseo, anseo, anseo … echoing across generations.

Now in the cold convent classroom that reeks of nuns’ wax polishing,
I am keeper of the book.
I itemise, categorise and collate, notch up the tall black pillars of ticks
and noughts.
Ni Mhurchús and Herreros, O’Rathallaigh and Maxilu, Akanadu, Ni
Cheallaigh, Adebambo, I call out across the globe to places scorched
sandy white, where lakes are red.
The nature table my equator,
a large island in the Northern
Hemisphere my desk, and, drifting in the Indian Ocean, the library.
I settle regional crayon and toy wars,

establish a fragile peace.
Allocator of religion, birth and death,
I am guardian of the past, account for the lost,
Audit the future, a tick for each successful arrival.
THE SAME SKY’S ROOF

David Mohan

On the other side of the world
is no more. We live underneath
the same sky’s roof, above
the same circuit of earth.

Now, in our house, swapping suns, moons,
I pass you tributes, barter desert sands
for lakes, rivers for dust-bowls, medicine
for manioc, rain storm for Harmattan.

Walking between rooms we taste each
other’s weather – you find shade in
my basement, I bask in your skylight’s sun.

Living in kind, we exchange seeds, stick notes
on the fridge door; I take in trade
a counterweight of dust to scatter elsewhere.

Soon, picture our gifts one summer –
from the same garden we bring forth
squash, yams, lettuce, you separate
seeds from flesh, I put them away

in envelopes, promising future crops,
warm soup, a household’s belly fed;
out of the basket I pluck one apple,
fling its lush green globe across the room

to where you wait to catch…
THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT
The Bold

There has never been a more perfect time to be a child
Than forty years from now.
Take it from me, it is pure bliss.
It’s funny how crimes like treason and perjury
Have lost status on earth.
Prevention of child abuse is the real deal.
Now everything is centered around the child;
This is the way it should be,
For at last adults would recognise us.
They now admit kids are alright.

This is so good it’s funny.
I am not complaining, I just never imagined
It would be so good.
We even have kids who are leaders.
Children are no longer punch bags for our parents.
We no longer follow unjust orders,
But we do what we want, when we want and
How we want, responsibly.
The kids are good, the kids are smiling,
The kids are happy, the kids are enjoying life.
But most importantly, the kids are alright.
A RITE
Eleanor Hooker

I swaddle the child and place her with her mother. *Eve*, she says, and rocks her softly, softly.

A cry gathers, wave-like, inside her, and when it is released, this woman, sorrowing, is both raging sea and capsized empty vessel.

She is held off from the peril of herself by her partner, who in his turn clings to calm. But, losing his grip against her spindrift, he too tastes sea salt.

The Chaplain can offer a blessing only; *Baptism is for the living, and not this innocent who remains with original sin.* We invite him to leave. And then,

following a ceremonial bathing of mother and child, we cleanse *Eve*, by intention, and with water.

BOLIVIAN CHILDREN
Caoilinn Hughes

The children from El Chorro were so much like adults with their outfits and their hardships; the main distinctions being bowler hats, stamina, the length of plaits.

They rushed up to examine us, prodding our rucksacks like alien illnesses with Aymara hecklings and muddy index fingers: momentary bridges between existences.

I stopped in my tracks to greet them, suddenly foolish in woollen clothes coloured by the blood of cochineal bugs and gore and sewn by too-small hands, too much like their own.

Their eyes drew towards an unopened Snickers in my glove like a love letter – its unseen, foreign parable might have been so much more than coco, sugar, caramel.

I am sure those pieces of our encounter were torn asunder later by too-small hands, too many muddy fingers waging war with cochineal blood beneath the nails, and a new taste for wayfarers that leave nothing but creases in Cholita skirts and sugar-coated leftovers.
INA DHÁ CHUID
Cian Ó Fátharta

Gan ann ach an domhan iomlán
Roinnte ina dhá chuid –
Ag an ainmhí ar a dtugtar
An cine daonna.
Roinnte ina phéire
Idir shaibhir agus daibhir.
Saol na ndaoine contráile dá chéile
Ag stádus an tsaihbris.
Iad bocht gan chúis,
Gan deoch i bpluais.
Sceanta leis an ocras
I bhforais i ngan fhios,
Fágtha ina n-aonair
Ag socháin an lae inniu.
Claonta ina n-aghaidh
Ag teorainn an tsaihbris
Muide anseo ag maireachtáil gan stró,
Ag déanamh leathshuim
Dóibh síúd ar an ngannchuid.

CUT
Jane Clarke

Where do you come from? How long are you here? Why did you leave?

I’ve grown accustomed to questions, but how to describe sunrise across the savanna, my sisters squatting to bake kisra, my father and brothers herding camels and goats or seated at noon beneath thorn trees for shade?

Would they believe why my mother took me away, that some morning after prayers, the women would come for me, hold me firm for Maryan’s stone-sharpened blade?

How to imagine the darkness of days alone in the hut, a grass-woven mat and the ointment of myrrh offered with love to stem the blood?
I hear the cry of fear.
Love, get ready for battle.

Love will throw
fear back to its den.

I feel fear upon us all.
It captures us, treats us like a ragdoll.

I taste victory for love.
I see shame for fear.

What love says touches my heart.
Fear, I forgive you.
THE FOX

Abbey Bi Yao Lin

Fear looks like
four prowling paws,
a small sniffing snout,
black eyes that are dull
with hunger.
It lurks in the street
hunting for food, hunting for hope.

Love grows
in the heart of the earth.
When the fox catches
the scent of love, it changes.

It grows new fur,
fluffy as a cloud
spread over the fox.

Love gives the fox
food and safety.
When love touches it,
the fox fills with kindness.

AINGANIFF*

John Donaghy

He was a man from the other side,
a wee neglected soul,
the sort my mother might have called
an ‘ainganiff’.
But he came to the wake house
where she was lying and, with permission,
caressed her hair
and, asking for leave, kissed her on the lips:
‘Many’s the scone she gave me
when I was passing on the street.’
And, not wishing to impose,
he went back to his nest
in the Protestant estate.

*A ‘Ainganiff’ is the phonetic version of the Irish ‘éan gan ubh’ – a shortened version of the Irish phrase ‘gan éan gan ubh’, meaning neither a bird/chicken nor an egg, and therefore an insignificant person.
THE OLIVE TREE
Sinéad O’Reilly

He gazes out the window
Through shattered glass:

The tree of his childhood
Jagged and broken.

He remembers picking olives with his father
In the warm evening sun.

A distant boom jolts him back to reality.
This town is a ghost town.

Grey shadows slink silently through the rubble,
One eye on the ground, the other on the sky.

A broken people
In this town wrecked by war.

One day this will end.
A new tree will grow
And he will pick olives again.

DISCLOSURE
Daragh Bradish

She rubs a finger on the doorpost,
hears the village mumble;
children scramble through
scraps of half-built furniture,
women draw up water,
men sit in circles on hot ground,
pass knowledge like a loaf.

They would devour her.
She senses fists of chosen stone.

At sunrise she had watched a bird crash
from the out-years through a beaded veil
to wreck the morning’s order
’til she caught its flight.
She felt a tiny heartbeat,
trembled, then released it
to the flesh-white sky.

She leans a shoulder on the doorpost
and prays a man to rise
above the conclaves of tradition,
take timber in rough hands,
respond to touch – the bumpy grain of it –
to start with human love,
make table tops more fit to feast from.
THE POWER OF POEMS

Eileen Casey

Poems detonate hope in those who are cast down, who hide in fear along remote hillsides. Poems are sturdy vessels when put to sea, strong enough to navigate stormy waves, rebuild war torn cities so rubble becomes sturdy foundations. Poems don’t turn a stranger from their door. Won’t allow shame or ignorance to cloud their better judgement. Poems replenish and revive, offer shelter, food, warmth. Lend reprieve to those bereft, who fear the sniper taking aim on the rooftop, smell cordite on the wing.

Poems pour oil on troubled waters, soothe and salve. Poems dry tears shed in lonely rooms on lonely streets at day-break or at close of day. Inspire other poems in other poets. Poems, with Love, conquer Fear. Are healing. Are heard above the roar of gunfire, battle-cries on battlegrounds where guns are loaded with greed, lust, hate. Poems go about their business, lighting Beacons that never will be quenched. Poems’ very presences weaken the same unease.

Fear thrives upon, stirred up by those who never can be easy. Those who break the homes and hearts of others. Poems release them too from this cycle. And their children. And their children’s children.

Poems bathe in sunlight yet know the icy chill. Poems forge a shield for grief yet make a space for laughter. Poems, like berries on a rowan tree are succulent, rosy food for singing birds, carrying the seeds of Love.
The Poems And The Poets

Abbey Bi Yao Lin’s poem ‘The Fox’ was joint runner up in the Primary Junior Category of the 2018 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Until love conquers fear’. She lives in Dublin.

Daragh Bradish’s poem ‘Disclosure’ won first prize in the Adult Published Category of the 2018 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Until love conquers fear’. Daragh was born in Dublin, and has lived in Dublin and Liscannor, County Clare. His poems have appeared in literary journals such as The Moth; Crannóg; The North; Acumen; Orbis; Poetry Salzburg Review; The French Literary Review; and The Irish Times. His collection Easter in March (2016) was published by Liberties Press. He has co-ordinated the annual ‘Soundings for Simon’ readings since 2010, and the monthly reading session ‘Listeners’ with Paul Bregazzi in Rathfarnham since 2016. He is a member of C.B. Quarterman, a poetry collaborative, whose pamphlet Probe (2014) was published by The Other World Press.

Matthew Brigdale’s poem ‘Clouds’ was joint runner up in the Primary Junior Category of the 2017 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Before the Storm’. Matthew lives in Clontarf, Dublin.

Christine Broe’s poem, ‘The Kerchief’, won first prize in the Adult Published Category of the 2019 Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Land is life’. As well as being a poet, she is an artist and an art therapist. She has had two collections of poetry published, Solas Sólás (2003), and Lifting Light (2015), both by Swan Press. She won the inaugural Brendan Kennelly/Sunday Tribune Award in 2001 and the Premio Civí di Olbia Award in 2002. A film documenting her poetry and bog sculpture made in 2016 in collaboration with the Bealtaine Festival and IFI won an award for cultural short film at the Hollywood International Independent Documentary Awards. A trailer can be seen on her website, www.chistinebroe.com.

David Butler’s poem ‘Before the Storm’ won first prize in the Adult Published Category of the 2017 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Before the Storm’. His third novel, City of Dis (New Island), was shortlisted for the Kerry Group Irish Novel of the Year, 2015. His second poetry collection, All the Barbaric Glass, was published in 2017 by Doire Press. His eleven-poem cycle, ‘Blackrock Sequence’, a Per Cent Literary Arts Commission illustrated by his brother Jim, won the World Illustrators Award 2018 (books, professional section). Arlen House is to bring out his second short story collection, Fugitive, in autumn 2019. Literary prizes for poetry include the Féile Filiochta; Ted McNulty; Brendan Kennelly; Phizzfest Poetry Awards; and the Baileborough Poetry Prize.

Keila Cagney’s poem, ‘Windows’, was joint runner-up in the Primary Senior Category in 2019 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. Its theme is ‘Land is life’. Keila completed her primary schooling at the Presentation Primary School in Portarlington, County Laois in 2019, and is looking forward to starting first year in Scoil Chríost Rí, Portlaoise, County Laois.

Lorraine Carey’s poem ‘Signs’ won the joint runner-up prize in the Adult Published Category of the 2017 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Before the storm’. Lorraine is a poet and artist from Donegal. Her poems have appeared in Prole; Poetry Ireland Review; Orbis, Abridged; The Honest Ulsterman, Atrium; Crossways; The Blue Nib; Smithereens; Constellate and on Poethead. In 2017 she was a runner up in The Blue Nib Chapbook Competition. A Pushcart Prize nominee, she was the featured artist in Skylight 47(11) and North West Words (9). Her poetry has featured on The Christmas Poetry Programme on RTE Radio 1. A contributor to several anthologies, her debut collection is From Doll House Windows (Revival, 2017).

Elise Carey-McGibney’s poem, ‘Our Mistake’ was a joint runner up in the Primary Junior Category of the 2015 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Feeling
the heat’. She attends Mercy Mountbawn Secondary School, Tralee, County Kerry.

Angela T. Carr’s poem ‘The Mountain of Butterflies’ was joint runner up the in the Adult Published Category of the 2016 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Forced to flee’. She was also a prizewinner in the 2017 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland competition. She is a poet, editor and creative writing facilitator. Her poem, ‘Girl with Child on a Swan’s Wing’ was chosen as the 2018 Laureate’s Prize by Carol Ann Duffy. Her work has been placed or shortlisted in over 40 national and international literary competitions. She was selected for the Poetry Ireland Introductions series in 2014 and her writing is published in literary journals and anthologies in Ireland, the UK and the US. Originally from Glasgow, she lives in Dublin. www.adreamingskin.com

Eileen Casey’s poem, ‘The Power of Poems’ was joint runner up in the Adult Published Category of the 2018 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Until love conquers fear’. She is originally from the midlands and is now based in South Dublin. Her collections have been published by New Island, AltEnts (Poetry) and Arlen House (Prose). Her work features in anthologies by Dedalus, Faber & Faber, New Island, Poetry Ireland Review, The Nordic Irish Studies Journal, among others. Her small press, Fiery Arrow, published a response anthology to the poetry of Patrick Kavanagh entitled ‘The Lea-Green Down’ (2018). Her many awards include a Hennessy/Sunday Tribune Emerging Fiction Award and a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship. She holds an MPhil (Creative Writing) from Trinity College, Dublin.

Jane Clarke’s poem ‘Cut’ won second prize in the Adult Published Category of the 2013 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Today’s children, tomorrow’s world’. She is author of two poetry collections, The River (2015) and When the Tree Falls (2019), both published by Bloodaxe Books, as well as an illustrated chapbook, All the Way Home, (Smith|Doorstop, 2019). In 2016 she won the Hennessy Literary Award for Emerging Poetry, and Listowel Writers’ Week Poem of the Year Award, and

The River was shortlisted for the Royal Society of Literature’s Ondaatje Prize. Originally from a farm in County Roscommon, Jane now lives in County Wicklow. www.janeclarkepoetry.ie

Catherine Coen’s poem ‘The Monster in the Sky’ won first prize in the Primary Senior Category of the 2017 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Before the storm’. She was then a pupil of Sooey National School, and is now she is a student in Coola Post Primary in Sligo.

Adam Cooper’s poem ‘How to Survive a Storm’ won first prize in the Post-Primary Senior Category of the 2017 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition when he was a sixth-year student at Oaklands Community College in Edenderry, County Offaly. The competition’s theme was ‘Before the storm’. Adam is an aspiring young poet. He writes poetry, short stories and music as well as performing in films and plays. He shares his works on his Instagram blog which can be found at @adamcooperpoetry.

Bernie Crawford’s poem ‘The Hurricane’ won first prize in the Adult Non-Published Category of the 2017 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Before the storm’. Bernie lives near the sea in County Galway. In 2019 she was awarded a bursary by Galway County Council. She is working on her first collection. Her poetry features in The Blue Nib Chapbook 3 published in December 2018. Her poetry has been featured on Sunday Miscellany and in Poetry Ireland Review 128, The North magazine, The Stony Thursday Book, Mslexia, Cranmog and elsewhere. She is on the editorial board of the poetry magazine Skylight 47.

Maurice Devitt’s poem ‘Inuit’ won first prize in the Adult Non-Published Category of the 2015 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Feeling the heat’. A graduate of the MA in Poetry Studies at Mater Dei, he recently published his debut collection, Growing Up in Colour (Doire Press). His poems have been nominated for Pushcart, Forward and Best of the Net prizes, and his Pushcart-nominated poem, ‘The Lion
Tamer Dreams of Office Work’, was the title poem of an anthology published by Hibernian Writers in 2015. He is curator of the Irish Centre for Poetry Studies site.

Kate Doheny/Kate Ní Dhubhchonna’s poem ‘Wastelands’ won the runner-up award in the Post-Primary Senior Category of the 2016 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Forced to flee’. In 2016 she was a Fifth-Year student in Gaelcholáiste Cheatharlach. She is now a student of psychology at Trinity College Dublin. She grew up in Carlow with her parents, two sisters and brother, and always had an interest in, and an admiration for, the written word, which was greatly encouraged by friends and teachers in primary and secondary school. Trócaire has always been a symbol of awareness and generosity in her life since she brought her first Trócaire box home from school, and for her the opportunity to be a small part of the ongoing work of this organization is a privilege.

John Donaghy’s poem ‘Ainganiff’ won first prize in the Adult Non-Published Category of the 2018 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Until love conquers fear’. John is a native of Derry city. He has worked as a teacher, youth worker and group facilitator and trainer. Since his retirement in 2015, he has given more serious attention to the writing of poetry. He has had poems published in The Irish Times, The Derry Journal and Sarasvati magazine. He was shortlisted for the Bridport Prize in 2015 and has also won the non-published section of the Poetry Ireland and Trócaire Competition 2019. He now lives in Moville, Co Donegal with his wife Lallie and son Conor.

Mairéad Donnellan’s poem ‘Unto Me is the Journeying’ won first prize in the Adult Non-Published Category of the 2016 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Forced to flee’. She lives in Bailieborough, County Cavan. Her poetry has been published in various anthologies and magazines. She has been shortlisted in national poetry competitions including Cúirt New Writing Prize and Doire Press chapbook competition. Her poetry has been broadcast on RTE Radio 1. She was winner of the Ledwidge poetry prize in 2013. She was selected for Poetry Ireland Introductions in 2019.

John Dunne’s poem ‘This is our Journey through the Night’ won first prize in the Primary Junior Category of the 2016 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Forced to flee’. In 2016 he was eleven years old and a fourth class pupil of Scoil Gharbháin, Dungarvan, County Waterford.

Kate Ellis’s poem ‘Shadows’ was winner of first prize in the Post-Primary Junior Category of the 2012 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Imagining a just and free world’. In 2012 she lived in Galway.

Helen Fallon’s poem, ‘Shell-Shocked Land’, was joint runner up in the Adult Non-Published Category of the Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Competition in 2019, and it was her first poem to be published. The 2019 competition’s theme was ‘Land is life’. The poem was inspired by the death-row correspondence of Nigerian writer and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa to Sister Majella McCarron (OLA), which is held in Maynooth University Library. Helen Fallon was born in Monaghan and now lives in Maynooth where she works in the university library. She has been writing articles and stories since returning from working in Sierra Leone some years ago.

Romy Fehily’s poem ‘Drifting’ won first prize in the Post-Primary Junior Category of the 2016 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. Its theme was ‘Forced to flee’. She was then fourteen years old and lives in County Limerick. She attended Laurel Hill Coláiste FCJ.

Nicki Griffin’s poem ‘Cast Away’ won first prize in the Adult Published Category of the 2016 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Forced to flee’. Nicki Griffin lives in east Clare. Her debut collection of poetry, Unbelonging (Salmon Poetry, 2013), was shortlisted for the Shine/Strong Award 2014 for best debut collection. The Skipper & Her Mate (non-fiction) was published by New Island in 2013. Crossing Places...
future perfect

(2017), her second collection of poetry, was published by Salmon Poetry. She has been published in a wide variety of journals and anthologies. She is co-editor of the poetry newspaper Skylight 4.

Anthony Hegarty’s poem ‘The Glaciers’ was joint runner up in the Adult Non-Published Category of the 2014 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘It’s up to us’. He lives in County Galway and has had a poem published in Burning Bush 2. He won the Kenny’s Bookshop Culture Night poetry prize in 2013. After teaching and then directing a small theatre company in London, he retired to Ireland to write in 1994. He has an MSc in Transpersonal Psychology. His blog is www.hugofgaia.com.

Eleanor Hooker’s poem ‘A Rite’ won first prize in the Adult Published Category of the 2013 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Today’s children, tomorrow’s world’. She has published two poetry collections with Dedalus Press, A Tug of Blue (2016) and The Shadow Owner’s Companion (2012). Her third collection will be published in 2020, and she’s working on a novel. She holds an MPhil (Distinction) in Creative Writing (Trinity College, Dublin), an MA (Hons) in Cultural History (University of Northumbria), a BA (Hons 1st) (Open University). She is a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London, and a helm for Lough Derg RNLI Lifeboat. Her poems appear in literary journals internationally, including Poetry Ireland Review, POETRY, PN Review, The Stinging Fly, Agenda, The Well Review, The Irish Times, and have been broadcast on RTÉ. www.eleanorhooker.com

Caoilinn Hughes’s poem ‘Bolivian Children’ won first prize in the Adult Non-Published Category of the 2013 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Today’s children, tomorrow’s world’. She is author of Orchid & the Wasp (OneWorld 2018), which was shortlisted for the Hearst Big Book Awards and the Butler Literary Award, and longlisted for the Authors’ Club Best First Novel Award. Her poetry collection, Gathering Evidence (Carcanet 2014), won The Irish Times Shine/Strong Award and the Patrick Kavanagh Award, and was a finalist for four other competitions. For her short fiction, she won The Moth International Short Story Prize 2018 and an O. Henry Prize in 2019. Her work has appeared in Granta, POETRY, Tin House, Best British Poetry, BBC Radio 3 and elsewhere. Her next novel, The Wild Laughter, will appear in May 2020.

Ann Joyce’s poem ‘Marking Time’ won first prize in the Adult Published Category of the 2015 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Feeling the heat’. Her poetry collection, Meabh & The River in Me, was published in 2018, and Watching for Signs was published by Dedalus Press (2005). One of the poems, ‘My Mother is Arranging Everything,’ has been performed by Crazy Dog Audio Theatre, Dublin as part of The Bee Loud Glade project, 2011. Meabh – The Crimson Path, a CD of poetry, music and song in collaboration with traditional musician John Carty, was released in 2011. Ann Joyce writes songs; sings with the all-female shanty group, Eight Bells; and is Art Co-ordinator for Wild Atlantic Shanty Festival, Rosses Point.

Jill Kenny’s poem, ‘Nur’, was joint runner up in the Adult Non-Published category of the 2019 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Land is life’. Jill is an emerging poet/writer based in Birr, County Offaly. Drawing on her background education in English Literature, Multimedia and Philosophy, she is also incorporating concrete poetry into her work. One of her poems was highly commended at the Blacklion Poetry Competition 2019, and she has been an active member of the Sapphire Writers group at the Irish Writers’ Centre since 2016. Jill is interested in exploring themes of interconnectivity with the self, people and the natural environment.

Wilma Kenny’s poem ‘The Walnut Dresser’ was joint runner up in the Adult Published category of the 2014 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘It’s up to us’. She is an award-winning writer from Belfast and has been published in Ireland and America. Her work has appeared in The Blue Nib and in Alan Hayes ed., Washing Windows? Irish Women...
Write Poetry (Arlen House). She was the winner of the Waterford Writers Competition 2018. She enjoys collaborations such as the exhibition ‘Experimental Processes’ in which she participated and which combined the work of poets and an artist.

Jake Kilcoyne Kellegher’s poem ‘Hurricane’ was joint runner up in the Post-Primary Senior Category of the 2017 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition when he was in fifth year in Sancta Maria College, Louisburgh, County Mayo. The competition’s theme was ‘Before the storm’. He spends his free time reading books or watching nature documentaries. His love of books and reading has led him to work in his local community bookshop, Books@One, in Louisburgh at the weekends.

Fionn McGibney’s poem ‘Forgiveness’ was joint runner up in the Primary Junior Category of the 2018 competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Until love conquers fear’. In 2018 Fionn McGibney attended North Bay School in Dublin.

Afric McGlinchey’s poem ‘Slow Dancing in a Burning Room’, (Salmon, 2016), was joint runner up in the Adult Published Category of the 2015 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Feeling the heat’. A multi-award winning poet, she is the author of two well-received collections, The Lucky Star of Hidden Things (2012) and Ghost of the Fisher Cat (2016) (in which ‘Slow Dancing in a Burning Room’ is published), both by Salmon Poetry, the former of which was translated into Italian and published by L’Arcolaio. Her latest publication is a surrealist chapbook titled Invisible Insane (2019, SurVision). Her poems have been translated into five languages, and commissions have included a poem for the Cork Breast Check Clinic and for the Irish Composers Collective. Afric is currently completing a prose-poetry memoir for which she received an Arts Council bursary.

Dean McHugh’s poem ‘Born’ was winner of second prize in the Post-Primary Senior Category of the 2012 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Imagining a just and free world’. He is currently a PhD student in logic at the University of Amsterdam. He is from Lucan and studied at Lucan Community College, where the the poem published in this anthology was written. At Trinity College Dublin he studied English Literature and Philosophy, where he co-edited Icarus Magazine and from which he graduated in 2016. He is very grateful to the Poetry Ireland for its continued support of the written and spoken word in Ireland.

Geraldine Mitchell’s poem ‘Basso Continuo’ was awarded first prize in the Adult Published Category of the inaugural Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition in 2012. The competition’s theme was ‘Imagining a just and free world’. Her poem was also the competition’s overall winner and she was subsequently invited to act as poetry ambassador for Trócaire, which she did until 2015. Other awards include the Patrick Kavanagh Poetry Award which she won in 2008. She has published three collections of poetry, the most recent of which is Mountains for Breakfast (Arlen House, 2017). She has also written fiction for young people and a biography. She lives in County Mayo.

David Mohan’s poem ‘The Same Sky’s Roof’ won second prize in the Adult Published Category in the 2012 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Imagining a just and free world’. David Mohan is based in Dublin. He has been published in Agenda; Stand; Acumen; New Walk; The Cincinnati Review; Spoon River Poetry Review; Poetry Salzburg Review; and Measure. His poetry has been nominated for The Pushcart Prize.

Jade Moore’s poem ‘Tree’ was awarded first prize in the Post-Primary Senior Category of the 2019 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Land is life’. Jade is eighteen years old and is from Kildare. Since an early age she has taken an interest in the arts as a drama student. Her hobbies include reading and writing short stories and poems. She hopes to attend college to pursue an Arts degree. She then wishes to become an educator and further the love of the Arts as they are an important part of her life.
Luke Morgan’s poem ‘Atlas’ was winner of the first prize in the Post-Primary Senior Category of the 2012 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Imagining a just and free world’. Luke’s debut collection, Honest Walls, was published by Arlen House Press in 2016. He has had work published in Poetry Review; Poetry Ireland Review; the Irish Independent; Cyphers; and Crannóg, among others. He lives and works in Galway.

Hannah Murphy’s poem ‘Home’ was joint runner up in the Post-Primary Senior Category of the 2019 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. Its theme was ‘Land is life’. Hannah Murphy is eighteen years old. She writes that the Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition gave her the opportunity to share her poetry with others. Her love of reading has developed into a passion for writing poetry. She is set to start college in September 2019, and no matter what career she pursues, writing poetry will always be a big part of her life. She is extremely grateful to her family for their continued support and encouragement.

Chomhghuaird dán le Dairen Ní Chinnéide dar teideal ‘Buille na Trócaire’ an dara háit san Chatagóir Fhilí Fásta Foilsithe i gComórtas Trócaire agus Éigse Éireann 2015. Ba é téama an chomórtais ná ‘Feeling the heat’. Dairen Ní Chinnéide is a bilingual poet. The most recent of her nine published collections is Fé Gheasa: Spellbound (Arlen House, 2016). DELETED is her first collection in English, and is to be published in 2019 by Salmon Poetry. She has received numerous awards for her writing, including Irish Language Literature Bursaries from the Arts Council and a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship. She was Irish Language Writer-in-Residence at DCU in 2017–2018. She has performed her poetry at festivals and literary events throughout Ireland, Europe and the United States of America.

Rug Muireann Ní Óidéain an chraobh leis san Chatagóir Iar-Bhunscoile Shóisearach i gComórtas Trócaire agus Éigse Éireann 2017 le dán dar teideal ‘Ag Fanacht leis an Stoirm’. Ba é téama an chomórtais ná ‘Before the storm’. She is an eighteen-year old Dublin poet who writes both in English and Irish. She attends an all-Irish school and intends to promote the Irish language through poetry, drama and music. ‘Ag Fanacht leis an Stoirm’ is her first published work.

Cian Ó Fátharta’s poem ‘Ina Dhá Chuid’ won first prize in the Post-Primary Senior Category of the 2013 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition when he was seventeen and was a pupil at Coláiste Cholmcille in the Connemara Gaeltacht. The competition’s theme was ‘Today’s children, tomorrow’s world’. Dar leis, ‘Cé nach dtabharfainn file orm féin, airím gur modh éifeachtaidh echo chuí cothair muironn biafichta faoin mbíonn ag taim os mo chomhchuir amach sa saol laethúil a chur i uíil. Anuas ar sin, airím freisin go bhfuil léargas ar leith faighe agam ar an saol agus an domhan nó rithimpeall ormar agheall ar mo chuid taithí ag fás anois i nGaeltacht Chois Fhharraige.’

Rug Seán Ó Raghailláigh an chraobh leis san Chatagóir Bhunscoile Shinséarach i gComórtas Trócaire agus Éigse Éireann 2019 le dán dar teideal ‘Beo’. Ba é téama an chomóráidit ná ‘Land is life’. Seán Ó Raghaillágh is an eighteen-year old Dublin poet who writes both in English and Irish. She attends Gaelfhalaiaste Phortlárige.

Cliona O’Connell’s poem, ‘Genealogy’ was joint runner up in the Adult Published Category of the 2019 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Land is life’. Cliona O’Connell’s first collection of poetry, White Space, was published in 2012. She was winner of the 2011 Cork Literary Review Manuscript Competition; runner-up in the 2011 Patrick Kavanagh Award; selected for the 2010 Poetry Ireland Introductions Series; and shortlisted for the 2009 Hennessey Literary Awards for Emerging Poetry. Cliona has an MA in Poetry Studies from Dublin City University and an MPhil in Creative Writing from Trinity College Dublin.

Karen O’Connor’s poem, ‘Tubrid’, was joint runner up in the 2014 in the Adult Published Category of the 2014 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘It’s up to us’. She has won the Listowel Writers’ Week Single Poem Prize, The Allingham Poetry Award, The Jonathan Swift Creative Writing Award for Poetry, and the Nora Fahy Literary Awards for Short...
Story. She is a poet and short-story writer, and her work has appeared in many magazines and anthologies. Her first poetry collection was FINGERPRINTS (On Canvas) (Doghouse Books, 2005). Her second collection, Between The Lines, also from Doghouse Books (2011), was featured on RTÉ Radio 1 Arts Programme, Arena.

Clare O’Reilly’s poem, ‘History of the World’, won first prize in the Adult Non-Published Category of the 2012 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Imagining a just and free world’. She also won first prize in the Jonathan Swift Poetry Awards; Crawford Art Poetry Award; and the Charles Macklin Prize. Her poems have featured in the Sunday Tribune (Hennessy Award); Poetry Ireland Review; The Honest Ulsterman; Skylight 4; The Golden Pen; Flare; and The Ogham Stone. Her short stories were broadcast in the Francis MacManus Short Story Competition and were shortlisted for the Over the Edge Award; Fish Short Story Prize; the Colm Toibín International Short Story Award; and Books Ireland competition. She received second place in the Benedict Kiely Short Story Competition.

Sinéad O’Reilly’s poem ‘The Olive Tree’ was winner of first prize in the Post-Primary Junior Category of the 2018 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Until love conquers fear’. Sinéad O’Reilly is a student at Loreto Secondary School, Wexford.

Michael Ray’s poem ‘Elegy’ was joint runner up in the Adult Non-Published Category of the 2017 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Before the storm’. Michael is a prizewinning poet and visual artist living in Cork, Ireland. His poems have been anthologised and have appeared in many journals including The Moth; The Shop; Cyphers; The Penny Dreadful; One; Southword; The Stinging Fly; Ambit; Magna; Numero Cinq; The Well Review; The North; and New Coin. He has read at a number of literary events, including Listowel and Cork International Poetry Festival. Most recently his work was included in The Best New British and Irish Poetry 2018.

The Bold, aka Leroy Ndlovu’s poem ‘The Kids are Alright’ was selected for an award from a special category for young writers from Zimbabwe in the 2013 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘Today’s children, tomorrow’s world’. The Bold is now a Junior Facilitator at African Community Publishing Development Trust, currently a block release student at Midlands State University studying History and International Studies. He writes that he is ‘Always and forever passionate to make sure that the kids are all right.’

Emma Tobin’s poem ‘The Anarchist’ was winner of the first prize in the Post-Primary Senior Category of the 2014 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘It’s up to us’. She was then seventeen and a fifth-year student in the Holy Family Secondary School in Newbridge, County Kildare. Emma is now twenty-two and lives in Kildare. She began studying for her Master’s Degree in Creative Writing in UCD in September 2019. Her poetry has been published in The Irish Times and in UCD’s Litsoc publication, Caveat Lector. She is currently working on a contemporary young adult novel.

Mary Turley-McGrath’s poem, ‘Valley of the Birches’ won first prize in the Adult Published Category of the 2014 Trócaire and Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition. The competition’s theme was ‘It’s up to us’. She is from Mount Talbot on the Galway/Roscommon border. She lives in Letterkenny and holds an MPhil. in Creative Writing from Trinity College Dublin. Her three poetry collections are New Grass under Snow (Summer Palace Press, 2003); Forget the Lake (2014) and Other Routes (2016), from Arlen House. Mary has given readings at Stroketown Poetry Festival; Clifden Arts Festival; Shorelines Festival; and in The Irish Writers Centre. Her poems were broadcast on RTÉ 1 Sunday Miscellany. She has been successful in many Poetry Competitions and her poems appear in anthologies, including the Forward Anthology 2011.
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“In these pressured and troubled times, it seems almost counterintuitive to read and make poems, stopping places in language where we can take stock of ourselves — but poetry endures, as witnessed by those thousands of children who respond every year to this brave and exciting venture on the part of Trócaire and Poetry Ireland/Éigse Éireann. We have not done yet, it seems, with empathy, solidarity and wonder, the qualities that shine out in poem after poem in this gem of an anthology. ‘Walking between rooms’ says David Mohan in his poem, ‘we taste each other’s weather’. We reach out in understanding to those others who share with us ‘the earth and airborne essence of their land’, as Christine Broe has it in her poem here.

This beautiful gathering of poems offers a great and necessary truth: we have each other still, and sharing the work of our imaginations and our creative dreaming we can reach to the peace of understanding.”

Theo Dorgan
POET AND FORMER DIRECTOR OF
POETRY IRELAND/ÉIGSE ÉIREANN

“'This beautiful anthology captures the soul of our age through the eyes of some of Ireland’s poets. It is impossible to read these words and not be stirred to reflect deeply and to act for a just world.”

Lorna Gold, author of Climate Generation: Awakening to Our Children’s Future

Cover image: Eddie Kennedy: White Sea Black Sod, 2014, oil on linen, 69 x 58 cm. Image courtesy of Hillsboro Fine Art, Dublin