

2019 Ballyroan Library World Poetry Day Competition

We had over 150 entries this year, and since the standard was so high, we have a number of highly commended entries which we have decided to also publish.

Congratulations to all those shortlisted!

Highly Commended Entries (in alphabetical order):

Closed by Phil Lynch

Croí by Emma Gallagher

Frost by Sean Smith

Growing Wild in Churchtown by Sinead Griffin

Oranges by Eileen Casey

Rebirth by Christine Broe

The Sun Also Burns by Steve Denehan

Three of the seven poems are reproduced with kind permission below:

Closed

No train or public bus came near,
though sometimes it seemed all roads
converged as if it were a busy station,
this isolated heart of a remote place.

Nothing left but broken shelves
once filled with sweets and bread
and cigarettes, unfiltered,
unlike the seditious conversations
held in corners out of reach
in breach of normal protocols.
Strangers often tramped the roads,
stopping for a mug of milk and a look
at that day's paper, in search perhaps
it was said, of some secret code.

At parties filled with songs
and late-night storytelling,
neighbours traded gossip
in the kindest of unkind ways.
Sour dregs of bottled stout drained
when all was quiet, like now,
when new ghosts joined their kindred ranks
to trip up future passers-by
or tap them on the shoulder
like an acorn dropping from a tree.

Only those who have seen its glory
can understand the loss behind
each strangled branch of sweet-smelling
blackberry bush, abandoned flower beds
and buried pathways that led
to prairies, plains and battlefields,
steps that turned into stages,
hollow ditches a cover for first smokes,
supplies hidden among stones,
where thoughts of love once bloomed.

All smothered in the undergrowth
save for a few rescued relics
and skeleton accounts of events known,
the unknown forever lost.

Phil Lynch's poetry has appeared in various literary journals. He was the winner of the 2018 Intercollective Poetry Competition, a former runner-up in the iYeats Poetry Competition and shortlisted in a number of others. His collection, *In a Changing Light*, (Salmon Poetry), was published in 2016.

Croí

Croí doesn't really talk yet,
Even though he's nearly three,
You could be worried about it.

Still, he sticks his head into the kitchen,
And under the din of his
Three sisters,
Three cousins,
Aunt,
Two uncles,
Nana and
His granda,
He whispers,

“Juice”

The sound carries

Around the door,
That his tiny hand holds open
Just a crack,
On a different wavelength,
Over the floor
Strewn with
The remnants
Of the dancing show
That the girls had put on earlier,
While he hid in the press
Under the stairs.

Travels up the leg of the table,
Past his sticky handprint
That marks the spot
Where he'd held on and
Patted nana on the knee
Looking for another biscuit
Before the guests arrived.

Croí doesn't really talk yet,
But he's closing the door
And he's drinking a juice.

Emma Gallagher is a post-primary educator currently embarking on a creative writing journey.

The Sun Also Burns

I thought only babies could be jaundiced
that it was the healthy glow of birth
of newness
but you stared up at me with yellow eyes
set in skin
yellow as stale butter

just two days ago you joked
about being a real-life Simpson character
it was the last time I heard you laugh
and you got yellower still
as the light left you

you had flirted with the nurses
but yesterday you asked
in a solemn rasp
to be moved to a roadside room
so you could hear the traffic
the comforting mechanical flow
of other lives

there is no easy way to say it
so, they just say it
your organs are failing
there is nothing more they can do
and we wait in silence
holding hands, staring at each other
until

I had always been afraid
not of death
but of the *when*, the *why*, the *where*
but you
you went before me
and made it
and that makes it alright

Steve Denehan's recent publication credits include *The Irish Times*, *The Phoenix*, *Dodging The Rain*, *The Blue Nib*, *The Opiate* and *The Hungry Chimera*. He has been nominated for The Pushcart Prize and his chapbook, "Of Thunder, Pearls and Birdsong" is available from Fowlpox Press.