

Ireland's Poets: Finding Music Between a Troubled Past and an Uncertain Future

A talk with poems and music by **Bill Nevins (Handout #2)**

Below is a listing of some of the authors we will mention. There are SO many more.

Sources for poems: *An Anthology of Modern Irish Poetry* edited by Wes Davis, Harvard Univ. Press, 2010 and other volumes by the individual poets. You may also find these poets and their works online via Google and Youtube.

Seamus Heaney (1939-2013) "Digging", 1966 *Between my finger and my thumb / The squat pen rests; snug as a gun. / Under my window, a clean rasping sound / When the spade sinks into gravelly ground: / My father, digging, . . . The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap / Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge / Through living roots awaken in my head. / But I've no spade to follow men like them. / Between my finger and my thumb / The squat pen rests. / I'll dig with it.*

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), from "Under Ben Bulbin", 1933 *Irish poets learn your trade / Sing whatever is well made, / Scorn the sort now growing up / All out of shape from toe to top, / Their unremembering hearts and heads / Base-born products of base beds. / Sing the peasantry, and then / Hard-riding country gentlemen, / The holiness of monks, and after / Porter-drinkers' randy laughter; / Sing the lords and ladies gay / That were beaten into the clay / Through seven heroic centuries; / Cast your mind on other days / That we in coming days may be / Still the indomitable Irishry. . . . / Under bare Ben Bulbin's head / In Drumcliff churchyard Yeats is laid, / . . . On limestone quarried near the spot / By his command these words are cut: / Cast a cold eye / On life, on death. / Horseman, pass by!*

Padraic Fiacc (1924-2019) From "Goodbye to Brigid / an *Agnus Dei* My little girl, my Lamb of God, / I'd like to set you free from / Bitch Belfast as we pass the armed / -to the back teeth barracks and / Descend the road into the school / Grounds of broken windows from / a spate of car-bombs, but / Don't forgive me for not.

Thomas Kinsella (1928-2021) poem "At the Western Ocean's Edge" and his translation of *The Tain / The Cattle Raid* **Horslips** band, song "Dearg Doom" (from their album *The Tain*) "And when the stars go out / You can hear me shout / Two heads are better than one / One hundred heads are so much better than none"

John Montague, (1929-2016) poem "A Grafted Tongue" (*Dumb, / bloodied, the severed / head now chokes to / speak another tongue . . .*

Michael Longley (b. 1939) poem "Letter to Derek Mahon" "Our imaginary Peace Line / around the burnt-out houses of / The ILE Catholic we'd barely loved"

Seamus Deane (1940-2021), poem "Derry" "The unemployment in our bones / erupting on our hands in stones"

Michael Hartnet (1941-1999) poem “I Say Farewell to English Verse”

Derek Mahon (1941-2020) poems include “Antarctica”, “The Globe in Carolina”

Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin (born 1942) poem “Borders”

Eavan Boland (1944-2020), poem “Mise Eire”, “The War Horse”

Paul Durcan (born 1944) poems “My Beloved Compares Herself to a Pint of Stout”, “In Memory of Miami Show Band”

Ciaran Carson (1948-2019) poems “Belfast Confetti” “The Rising of the Moon”

Tom Paulin (born 1949) poem “Not Musical” and “Killed in Crossfire”. The rock band *tompaulin* was named after him!

Michael Davitt (1950-2005) poems “Clay Memories” “For Bobby Sands on the Eve of His Death” “The Call”

Medbh McGuckian (born 1950) poem “Querencia”

Peter Fallon (born 1951) poem “Fair Game”

Paul Muldoon (born 1951) poems “Meeting the British” and song on “Music” with his band **Rogue Oliphant**

Shane MacGowan (1957-2023) songwriter-poet who wrote “The Sickbed of Cuchulainn”, “The Broad Majestic Shannon” and many other lyrics, recorded with the bands *The Pogues* and *The Popes*.

Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill (born 1952) poem “Abduction”

David Wheatley (born 1970) poem “Poem”

Sinéad Morrissey (born 1972) poem “Tourism

Annemarie Ní Churreáin (born 1981) from the Donegal Gaeltacht. Books include *Bloodroot* and *The Poison Glen*. ‘I was raised in the shadow of men who wanted to conquer wildness’
Annemarie Ní Churreáin <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olykLf1Td84>

Adrian Rice, a Belfast born poet and musician, from the Loyalist community. He is now a Senior Lecturer at Appalachian State University, and just successfully defended his doctoral dissertation in November 2023. (It is entitled 'Between the Planter & the Gael: A Cross-Community Education in Poetry.) Latest book: *The Chances of Harm*, 2024.

Attracta Fahy poet and social work counselor, books include “Dinner in the Fields”.

Matt Mooney (born 1943) is a farmer poet. He has been a feature reader in *The White House* (Limerick), *Ó Bhéal* (Cork), *On the Nail* (Limerick), and has featured online in *Cultivating Voices* (USA) and *Not the time to be Silent* (Limerick).

Fergus Hogan (born 1971). Books include *Bittern Cry*.

Seamus Ruttledge Tuam Galway based poet and song writer.

Lankum band (Radie Peat, Daragh and Ian Lynch, Cormac MacDiarmada) song “Cold Old Fire”, 2014. *We always sing, even when w'ere losing/Cos Dublin's drone is hard enough especially/When you're down and you're boozing/We sing the Oul' Triangle and then the Tommy Ryan/Cos all the world's a jail and we can't remember why/Why we agreed to live and lie in embers/Of a cold old fire nobody remembers*

Peter “Cursed” Murphy whose band is Cursed Murphy Vs. The Resistance. Songs include “A Foxhole Prayer”

Terence Winch is a US- born Irish trad musician and poet, author of “When New York Was Irish”.

Larry Kirwan, born in Wexford, has lived in NYC for decades. Author, playwright and song writer of the Black 47 band, he hosts the weekly Sirius XM The Loft show Celtic Crush with eclectic music and commentary.