

Before the Storm

TRÓCAIRE AND POETRY IRELAND
POETRY COMPETITION 2017



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Before the Storm

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POETRY COMPETITION 2017



The remains of houses destroyed by rising seawater on the coastline peninsula of Omoa, Cortés, Honduras.

Photographer: Clare McEvoy/Trócaire

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Yalile Hodeth Marques (45) at her home in the coastal community of Cuyamel, Omoa, Cortés, Honduras.

Photographer: Clare McEvoy/Trócaire



Adult Published Category



The remains of houses destroyed by rising seawater on the coastline peninsula of Omoa, Cortés, Honduras.

Photographer: Clare McEvoy/Trócaire

BEFORE THE STORM

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, when 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.

David Butler



SIGNS

Seaswell 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 water lines 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.

Lorraine Carey



HURRICANE REDUX

The baleful eye twitches: unpicks the skirl,
the lazy waltzing train of its solemn round;

tree, rock, soil, snake back to forest cloud and mountain,
landslides of silted debris squirm, uncoil;

rubble leaps like salmon in the rainfall shiver
of the river's spill, spawns roads, barns, sunken town

bowed trees rise, as if from prayer, fallen men rebound,
their hands flying high in startled hallelujahs;

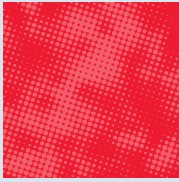
bridges reconnoitre banks with stony fingers,
mangrove striplings skip from blackish pools, undrowned,

a sheet-black deluge becomes showers becomes spots.
Precipitates the sky's bosomy eiderdown;

Women coax pyjamaed children to their cots,
Out along the coastline, the first alarms sound.

Angela T. Carr





Adult Non-Published Category



THE HURRICANE

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.

Bernie Crawford



LOSS CONTROL

You know it's coming, can feel it before you see it,
like a woman who walks on eggshells
to keep the peace
protect the kids
from the worst of it
but no matter
how clean the house
how perfect the steak
how even her voice
how careful her make-up
it happens anyway.
Not this time.

This time you will be gone before the first thunderclap,
there will be nothing to rage against
except walls and doors
wooden floors
white goods
throws and cushions
on a red sofa
a laundry basket
a wedding album
a sleigh bed
things you can survive
without.

Caroline Bracken



ELEGY

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

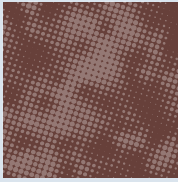
the rains fall, the rains fall, and the moon
pulls tides like a slave. My youngest, Alma,
she knows how it all works, and says leaving
will become a habit. The sky here is cracked;
what issues cannot change its mind.

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.

Michael Ray





Post-Primary Senior Category

Transition Year, 5th and 6th Year





HOW TO SURVIVE A STORM

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.

Adam Cooper



REPORT

From the fickle letters
And poignant numerals
Cross-hatched over the most bleak canvas,
Arises yet another masterpiece.

In the office the conversation shifts oh so briefly
As an obligation based discussion ensues;
The opposing desk has 'It's a once
In every 500 year event' to throw away.
While one suit offers an alternative truth
As he counts the 8 floods over the last 12 months
Across the hand reminding him to pick up milk.

Like a starving toddler in a rocker,
The climate does everything to get our attention.
Her cry inducing issues dismissed as teething
Or a simple shift in behavioural pattern.

A report has little effect.
Our conversations thirsty for anything else:
Art, work, family life.
We choose to ignore the inconvenient truth.

The next storm is on us.

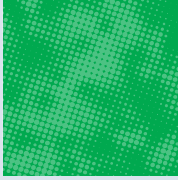
Ciara Fennessy



HURRICANE

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.

Jake Kilcoyne Kellegher



Post-Primary Junior Category

1st–3rd Year



AG FANACHT LEIS AN STOIRM

An charraig agus an fharraige fágtha.
Gan smaoineamh orainne –
Na daoine a stróic é
Mar bhrat san fhuacht
San oíche dhubh mar thaipéis
Gan réalt ann, mar a bheadh bradán, gléigeal

D’fhan mé, mar pháirt de
Mar leoithne gaoithe

Agus thuig mé ansin,
Narbh fhéadfainn é a stopadh
Gan cumhacht na gaoithe aniar
I mo thimpeall.

Muireann Ní Éideáin



UNRAVELLED LIVES

Silver metal cans stacked row by row,
Wary eyes darting to and fro,
The doorway barricaded,
The light hung low.

Old green vines creeping up the wall,
The next big disaster about to fall,
Quick light steps, the cellar now in sight,
Young children scurry with growing fright.

The swaying ceiling light emits a soft glow,
Illuminating anxious faces, both young and old.
As the chaos fast approaches,
They pray for the best that their shelter will hold.

A whistle, a howl, a harsh pitter patter,
The old cellar creaks straining to hold.
A hushed silence falls upon those inside, as
The once determined souls, close their eyes,
Failing to open when daylight arrives.

Alison Ward



AT LAST WE MEET AGAIN

Hurricane, Hurricane
The boat is on its way.
You brought furious floods to our streets,
Darkness to our sights
Last time you came to stay.

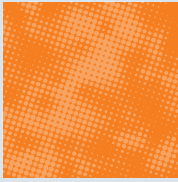
Your movement like a spinning top
With the force of a lion's roar
created havoc amongst those you see,
So why must you visit once more?

Supplies are all we need to get;
but will you give us time?
You took us by the worst surprise.
Some struggled to make it out alive.
Our children were prepared,
We gave them games to play
showing they can live if you ever come our way.

Others live too close to the splintering sea
but don't have the money to change.
Sea levels rising like sharks to the shore
and pouring with mountains of rain.
So Hurricane, Hurricane;
At last we meet again.

Cara Wallace





Primary Senior Category

5th–6th Class



THE MONSTER IN THE SKY

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.

Catherine Coen



THE LONE SAILOR

The sky was grey, when the clouds rolled in,
the captain felt the prickle of fear on his skin.
He knew it was coming, he felt it in the air,
all that was left now, was for him to prepare.
He ran on deck and adjusted the sail,
he pulled up the net, over the rail.

Then it hit, the first icy blast,
the force of it slammed him right into the mast.
He found his footing and stood up tall,
he looked to the sky, as he heard thunder's call.
All he could do was hold tight and wait,
hoping that this storm wasn't his final fate ...

Keisha-Paige Plant





FOREBODING

The warning comes in,
It's worse than they thought.
In a hurricane's path,
All items are caught.

They think back two decades,
To Hurricane Mitch,
Destroying the fields,
And crops that were rich.

It swept through the land,
Its fingers stretched out,
All houses and trees
Were snatched down its mouth.

The hurricane's hungry,
It wants to be fed,
It ploughs on, relentless,
Fills people with dread.

They try to build shelters,
Make ways to escape,
But some will not leave
For their history's sake.

They pile up the sandbags,
And build up the walls,
They know that tomorrow
Some houses will fall.

They gather together,
And ponder their fate,
All they can do now
Is sit there and wait.

Sinéad O'Reilly



Primary Junior Category

3rd–4th Class





SONGBIRD

The storm crept silently onto the beach like a tiger about to pounce on his prey.

We were the prey.

When the rose of dawn was about to come up, the sky remained dark.

I waited for people to run.

I helped them leave but I knew it was the end for me.

I was ok with that, I wanted to leave.

Soon I was alone; I waited for her to come.

I stared up at the sky as the song started.

The rain tapped a rhythm on the roofs.

The thunder clapped a beat.

The wind whistled a melody through the trees.

The waves sang a melancholy tune.

Then she appeared.

The spirit of the storm.

In storms before she had been: a hound made of wind, a bird made of rain, a snake made of clouds, but famously a girl in the waves.

Her song flowed over me like warm honey.

I thought it had been a dream before but she was real.

Very real.

Then she washed me away.

Hannah McCorry



THE THREE KINGS

Yesterday was great,
The world was perfect,
It was all nature,
A great king to live under,
But he left,
He left forever,
Leaving today in charge.

Today is a disaster,
He is destroying everything,
Fossil fuels burning,
Temperatures rising,
Sea levels high,
Winds too strong,
Everything destroyed,
But today shall go,
Leaving tomorrow in charge.

Tomorrow will be great,
Litter will stop,
Climate change will lower,
Oceans will cool down,
Global warming will be destroyed,
Today will be left in dirt,
He will be forgotten.

Cain O'Connor

CLOUDS

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.

Matthew Brigdale





Amauro Flores Archila with his sons Jason Alexander Flores (11), Marco Venicio Flores (9) and daughter Maria Fernanda Flores (4) at their flooded home in Colonia Victoria, Choloma, Honduras in June 2016.

Photographer: Clare McEvoy/Trócaire



Maria José Gonzáles Campo's (6) coastal house in Cuyamel, Omoa, Honduras is affected by life-threatening floods up to five times a year.

Photographer: Martin Calix

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

CAROLINE BRACKEN lives in Co. Wicklow, where she enjoys creative writing. She gets inspiration on walks by the sea with her dog Bobby. She works in RTÉ Radio.

MATTHEW BRIGDALE is eleven years old and lives in Clontarf, Dublin with his mum, dad and younger brother Ben. From a young age, Matthew has enjoyed writing poems and stories. His favourite subjects in school are creative writing and PE. He plays a lot of sports and enjoys writing because he believes there are no limits to how you can use your imagination.

DAVID BUTLER is a former teacher and lecturer and has been a full-time author since 2010. His most recent book of poetry, *All the Barbaric Glass*, was published by Doire Press. Aside from writing, David acts, directs and set-builds with several amateur theatre companies, and he also enjoys life drawing and oil painting. Having lived, worked and studied in such exotic spots as Venezuela and the Seychelles, he now lives by the sea in Bray with his wife, fellow author Tanya Farrelly. More at davidbutlerauthor.wordpress.com.

LORRAINE CAREY's poetry has been widely published in literary journals, including *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Vine Leaves*, *Proletarian*, *Live Encounters*, *ROPES*, *North West Words*, *Poethead* and *Atrium*, among others. A past winner and runner-up of the Charles Macklin Poetry Competition, she was shortlisted in the originals category at Listowel Writers' Week 2015. She has contributed poetry to several anthologies and her artwork was featured as the cover image for the May 2017 edition of *Three Drops From A Cauldron*. Her debut collection, *From Doll House Windows*, is published by Revival Press. A native of Greencastle, Co. Donegal, she now resides in Fenit, Co. Kerry.

ANGELA T. CARR's debut collection, *How to Lose Your Home and Save Your Life*, won the Cork Literary Review Poetry Manuscript Competition 2013 and was published by Bradshaw Books in 2014. Her work is published in literary journals and anthologies in Ireland, the UK and the US, including *Aesthetica*, *The London Magazine*, *Prelude* and *Mslexia*. She has been a winner or shortlisted in poetry competitions including the Bristol Poetry Prize, Trócaire Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition, Oxford Brookes Poetry Competition, The London Magazine Poetry Competition, and the Aesthetica Creative Writing Award. Originally from Glasgow, she now lives in Dublin. More at www.adreamingskin.com.

CATHERINE COEN is twelve years old. She is a bookworm and always tries to get chores done as quickly as possible so that she can sit on her bed and read *Harry Potter* for the thousandth time. No matter what she's doing, she always wears socks for fear that her cat will attack her feet.

ADAM COOPER is a sixth-year student at Oaklands Community College in Edenderry, Co. Offaly. His interests include writing, performing and acting. As a former member of Offaly Youth Theatre, he has performed in many productions across the midlands, winning Best Actor at the 2016 X-Hale Youth Awards for his role in the short film *The Revolution*, which he also penned. He has a great passion for the English language, writing songs and poems regularly. He wishes to go on to third level education and study English in the hope of becoming an English teacher.

BERNIE CRAWFORD lives near the sea in Co. Galway and enjoys writing and reading poetry. She is on the editorial board of the popular poetry magazine *Skylight 47*. She won first prize in the Dead Good Poetry Competition in 2013 and has been longlisted and shortlisted in a number of other competitions including Over the Edge, Fish Poetry, Poems for Patience and Cinnamon Press mini competition. Last September she won first prize at Culture Night 2016, Kenny's Bookshop, Galway. Her poems have appeared in several publications, including *Mslexia*, *Boyne Berries*, *Crannóg*, *Galway Review*, *Irish Left Review*, *Skylight 47* and *Lonestars*.

CIARA FENNESSY is seventeen years old and is in fifth year in Mount Sackville Secondary School. On weekends and during summers, she works for an outdoor adventure sports company and she is working towards a Silver Gaisce President's Award. Ciara loves the outdoors and is very passionate about this year's theme. She was encouraged by her English teacher, Ms Havel, to channel this passion into her writing.

JAKE KILCOYNE KELLEGHER is in fifth year in Sancta Maria College, Louisburgh, Co. Mayo. He spends his free time reading books or watching nature documentaries. His love of books and reading has lead him to work in his local community bookshop, Books@One, in Louisburgh at the weekends.

HANNAH MCCORRY likes drawing and any form of art. She enjoys writing poetry and likes to include personification in her work. Hannah likes to write about animals and short fantasy stories.

MUIREANN NÍ ÉIDEÁIN is sixteen and lives in Dublin. She enjoys swimming in the sea and travelling. This is her first poem written in Irish and it is dedicated to her younger brother Michael.

CAIN O'CONNOR enjoys writing poetry and short stories. Poetry has always made him feel at peace and allows him to put his feelings and dreams on paper and make them come alive. Thanks to the encouragement of his teacher, Mrs Wallace, Cain intends to continue writing poetry.

SINÉAD O'REILLY is twelve years old and attends the Mercy NS in Wexford. She enjoys athletics and playing the harp, piano and violin. Sinéad loves collecting antique books, many of which are poetry books, and her favourite book is *Wuthering Heights*.

KEISHA-PAIGE PLANT is twelve years old. Her hobbies include writing, drawing, reading, training and making people laugh. She loves to read and write about mythical creatures, mystery and comedy.

MICHAEL RAY is a poet and visual artist living in West Cork, Ireland. His poems have appeared in a number of Irish and international journals, including *The Moth*, *The Irish Independent*, *The Shop*, *Cyphers*, *The Penny Dreadful*, *One*, *Southword*, *The Stinging Fly*, *Ambit* and *Magma*. Michael's glass art has been collected by the Irish Craft and Design Council, the Department of Foreign Affairs and the National Museum of Ireland. When he's not writing or making art, he sails and practises as an art therapist.

CARA WALLACE is from Carryduff, Co. Down and has two dogs, Teddy and Molly. She plays badminton and loves doing arts and crafts in her spare time. Cara enjoys reading, and mystery novels are her favourite.

ALISON WARD is fourteen years old and attends Presentation Secondary School, Castleisland, Co. Kerry. Alison is an excellent student who loves art and the outdoors. She likes reading and travelling, and often uses this as inspiration for her writing.

Ireland is renowned for its literary and cultural heritage, as well as for its generosity in supporting those in need around the world. The annual Trócaire and Poetry Ireland poetry competition brings these two elements together in a creative way, using the arts to raise awareness about the leading global justice issues of our time.

To encourage emerging and experienced voices alike, the competition is open to all writers, ranging from published poets to primary school students, and there is no entry fee. This all-inclusive format is what makes the Trócaire and Poetry Ireland competition unique.

This year's theme, **Before the Storm**, explores how people prepare for extreme weather events caused by climate change. Honduras is one of the poorest countries in Central America and is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Between 1993 and 2014, at least sixty-five extreme weather events affected Honduras, including six of the twelve strongest hurricanes of the twentieth century.

Working with Trócaire, some of the most vulnerable communities in Honduras are taking action to ensure that they can fight back against the effects of climate change through Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). DRR involves making a plan to prepare for the next extreme weather event in order to minimise damage. It's what you do to get ready – before the storm.

The judges for this year's competition were award-winning poet **Jane Clarke, Aidan Clifford** of CDETB's Curriculum Development Unit, and Trócaire's **Trish Groves**.

We hope you enjoy this booklet of winning entries from poets across the island of Ireland.

Éamonn Meehan, Executive Director of Trócaire
Maureen Kennelly, Director of Poetry Ireland



TRÓCAIRE

Trócaire envisages a just and peaceful world where people's dignity is ensured and rights are respected; where basic needs are met and resources are shared equitably; where people have control over their own lives, and those in power act for the common good.

www.trocaire.org



POETRY IRELAND

Poetry Ireland/Éigse Éireann is the national organisation for poetry in Ireland and also runs the Writers in Schools Scheme, the mission of which is 'to empower the participant by facilitating a magical and memorable experience through the imaginative, emotional and intellectual energy and belief in language that the writer brings to the classroom'. We serve all thirty-two counties and receive support from **The Arts Council of Ireland/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon** and **The Arts Council of Northern Ireland**.

www.poetryireland.ie

Cover Photo: Brothers Carlos Daniel Paz Bueso (left) and Christian Javier Paz Bueso (right) from Exitos de Anach Bordo, Choloma, Honduras, a community frequently impacted by dangerous flooding and extreme weather. **Photographer:** Clare McEvoy/Trócaire
Photographers: Clare McEvoy/Trócaire and Martin Calix