

now the sun breaks through

Poems to mark the
25th anniversary of the
Belfast/Good Friday Agreement



British-Irish
COUNCIL

25
TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY



25

TWENTY-FIFTH  ANNIVERSARY

The British-Irish Council was established as part of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. The aim of the Council is “to promote the harmonious and mutually beneficial development of the totality of relationships among the peoples of these islands”.

The Council does this through providing a practical forum where its eight members can work together on issues of common interest. The Council allows Ministers to consult, share expertise and build strong partnerships, and comprises the UK and Irish Governments, the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, as well as the Isle of Man Government, Government of Jersey, and Government of Guernsey.

The rich linguistic heritage of the Council’s members is an important part of the culture of these islands. In recognition, Indigenous Minority and Lesser-Used languages was added to the Council’s portfolio of work sectors in June 2002. The work sector focuses on Irish, Welsh, Gaelic, Scots, Ulster Scots, Manx, Jèrriais, Guernésiais, and Cornish.

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*Edited by Samuel Tongue,
Scottish Poetry Library*

Scottish
Poetry
Library

The rich linguistic heritage across these islands is an important part of the culture of the British Irish Council's eight members. In marking the 25th anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, this anthology celebrates the Council's nine Indigenous, Minority and Lesser-Used languages. It recognises the efforts made across these islands to support these languages, which embody a wealth of knowledge, culture, and history that has been passed down through generations.

The British-Irish Council has collaborated with the Scottish Poetry Library to develop this poetry anthology, themed around the natural environment. Within this collection, readers are introduced to these languages, and their rhythms and expressions. The poems are composed by poets in the nine languages, and interpreted and adapted into English.

The collection provides a window into the diverse linguistic and cultural heritage across these islands, and the languages' connection to the land, seas and skies. The poems reflect the beauty and fragility of the natural world and are a reminder of the importance of preserving and protecting the environment for future generations.

Grein Glade

Kathleen Jamie

This grein glade i the wildwuid -
 jist as guid as oniwhaur
 dewy braith risin
 fi its heathery flair
 a widpecker drummin
 at jist jinked atween twa birks
 speeder-wabs glentin
 nou the sun breks through.-

Mibbe I'll bide
 easy agin this bowder
 learnin hou the wind dauts
 first this pine branch then thon,
 and watchin abune the tree-taps
 the clouds sail ower
 I'll dwam awa the oor
 like a bairn aince mair.

Ach, whaur are they gane
 ma mither and ma faither?
 whit gait they've taen
 I amna richt shiur -
 I'll follae suin eneuch
 but meantime taigle
 - Stane, did ye jist blink?
 aye, aince this thousan years.

Green Glade

Translation by author

This green glade in the wildwood -
 just as good as anywhere
 dewy breath rising
 from its heathery floor
 a woodpecker drumming
 that just darted between two birch trees
 spider-webs glinting
 now the sun breaks through.

Perhaps I'll remain
 at ease against this boulder
 learning how the wind pets
 first this pine branch, then that,
 watching above the tree tops
 the clouds sail over
 I'll dream away the hour
 like a child again.

Oh where have they gone
 my mother and my father?
 which way they've taken
 I'm not quite sure -
 I'll follow soon enough
 but meantime linger
 -Stone, did you just blink?
 yes, once in a thousand years.

Gealach na hAoine

Dairena Ní Chinnéide

Bhí ré lán ann is an oíche
Ag fás mar a dhéanfadh
Seód draíochta sa spéir
Selene na Gréige
Ag lonrú tríd an dorcadhas

Ar an oileán álainn ársa seo
Tá an ghrian ina suan
Luna ag cothú fíis nua
Ag bronnadh síochán
Ar chréacht deighilte

Ag líonadh is ag trá
Ag síorathrú
An nádúr ag éirí is ag meath
Mar a bheadh an fharraige mórthimpeall
Ag réiteach ar aighneas

Ag cneasú créacht na staire
Ag léiriú meas ar an uile ní
Agus cairt bán ag treabhadh
Trasna na spéire
Sí an ré céanna ag soilsiú orainn uilig

I measc sprid na ndaoine
Tá amhráin na féiniúlachta
Glórtha mórtasacha
Crochta mar a bheadh sí sa spéir dhorcha
Ag cothú meas agus grá

Chonac ansan í
Tráth an chomhaontaithe
Mo chroí ag líonadh le mórtas
Don don uile ní a thugann le chéile sinn
Ré na síochána.

Good Friday Moon

Translation by author

There was a full bright moon
and the night
Grew as if it were
A magic jewel in the sky
Selene of the Greek myth
Shining through the darkness

On this beautiful ancient island
The sun is asleep
Luna awakens a new vision
Bestowing peace
On the scars of division

Rising and waning
Constantly changing
As nature rises and falls
Like the seas around us
With the solutions of discord

Healing the wounds of history
Respect for each and every thing
Like the white chariot which ploughs
Across our skies
The same moon shines on all of us

Amongst the people
The songs of identity
Ring with sounds of pride
Hanging as she does in the dark sky
Nurturing respect and love

I saw her
In the time of agreement
My heart filled
For all things binding
The moon of peace in our time.

Seachdainn an dèidh Reachrainn

Pàdraig MacAoidh

Air an t-slighe air ais à Reachrainn
b' e am bàta beag a bh' ann,
eathar-motair le caban
agus suidhichean-deireadh fhosgailte.

'Bidh sibh bog fluich a-muigh a shin'
thuirt fear a' bhàta, agus bha e ceart -
bhris na tuinn thar an toisich,
gar drùidheadh sa spot agus sàl

gar slugadh 's gar n-aoibhneachadh
's ged a rùisg sinn am muir le ur n-aodach
dh'fhan sàlainn Sruth na Maoile
nar craiceann mar mhiann,

's tha an tonn an tonn fhathast a' sruthadh tromhainn

A Week from Rathlin

Translation by author

On the way home from Rathlin
it was the small boat – a motor-
boat with a cabin and open seats
out the back.

'You'll get soaked out there', the skipper said,
and he was right – the first waves
broke over the prow and drenched us in a oner, saltwater

overwhelming, exhilarating us
and though we peeled the sea off
with our clothes, the salt from Sruth
na Maoile had marked our skin like moles

and the wave the wave is still flowing through us

J'èrprêch'chons au haut dg'ieau

Geraint Jennings

J'èrouïthons-t-i'	- thées ichîn en bouochies,
acouo siez nous	ès cârriêthes, lé caût-
la hueûl'lie d'louêmes,	-as s'êmiol'la
la sùffliéthie d'sablion,	en galots d'mots,
la sonn'nie d'clioches en mé,	en nièr et vèrt,
lé rîncliot d'crêtes	èrbourpéthà not' langue
dé pierre tchi droquent	et rattîth'tha not' d'vis
en sillardes êm-	par sus les hougues,
-otuthées d'mottes heunées	et l'tou des grèves.
ès huthieaux êbliétés?	À lis d'nos mères,
L'èrgouonn'nie d'greunes,	les lô-lôs teus des tours
l'affrou d'falaises,	rêponn'nont à ches ruaux;
lé lamîn d'mielles:	les mielles et louêmes
nou r'cliâme en mots et clios	èrmurmuth'thont
chein tchi fut d'sèrté d'vant.	ès ports bèrchis....
Les rotchièrs rueûquent,	J'èrprêch'chons au haut dg'ieau.
les êtotchets	
en accliâssent: ch'est l'-	
-sablion tch'est à couôrre hors,	
hors dans un danmeléchant.	
Chu cârillon	
du r'sîn, d's agouîns,	
ch'est qu'i' sonne quas...	
l's êtchés d'grannit rigdonnent	
à égdachi les côtes.	
Mais qu'la vouaix d's Îles	
r'êmoûque les banques,	
les mouaies ama-	

We'll speak again at high water

Translation by author

Will we still hear	-ored here by the mouthful,
in our homeland	the stratum in the quar-
the roar of waves,	-ries will crumble
the whistling of the sand,	in word-shingle,
the chimes of sunken bells,	in black and green,
the rattling rock-	will ruffle up our tongue
-crests crashing down;	and rake up our speaking
mineral veins weath-	over the mounds,
-erbeaten by heaped mounds	round the beaches.
on the denuded heights?	Seamark-sheltered,
The quarrelling rocks,	hushed lullabies of towers
the cliffs' clearing.	will answer these channels;
the dunes' babble:	the dunes and waves
we claim in words and fields	will murmur back
what was laid waste before.	to cradled bays...
The boulders doze,	We'll speak again at high water.
the small sea-stacks	
drift asleep: it's	
the sands running out, out	
and gone in a moment.	
This alarm bell	
of surf and hurt,	
it rings off-key...	
the reefs of granite thrum	
enough to shred the coasts.	
When our shout out	
rouses the banks,	
the piled cairns anch-	

Karrek Loos Yn Koos

Taran Spalding-Jenkin

Baya an Garrek o koos unnweyth,
henhanow kanmol rag taklow glas.

Gwrys yn men kyns termyn hir
y kabolyn ni kastel tewes yn brykys.

A-dreus an morrep
gwreydh a neuv leun a dhowr,

kechys kepar ha delyow yn kowas wuns
ow beudhi y'n fros.

Ev a berth kov ahanan
hwath dyskys on ni dhe ankevi.

Menhes, ow kwaska goos a gyllas
rag styrya an kreryow liwus.

Ass yw henwyn nowydh a's rons i,
holan blesys bythkweth gans agan tавosow.

Ow kasa hepken gwithtiow a vorrep
ha henhwedhlow rag fleghe nebonan aral.

Karrek Loos Yn Koos

Translation by author

Mount's Bay was a forest once,
ancient name a eulogy to greenery.

Made stone long before we
mixed sandcastles into bricks.

Along the shore
roots swim waterlogged,

caught like leaves in gusts
drowning in the current.

It will remember us
even as we are taught to forget.

Petrified, squeezing blood from the shale
to explain away the colourful artefacts.

What new names they will give them,
a salt never tasted by our tongues.

Leaving only museums of the shoreline
and tales to tell someone else's children.

Yn Faarkey

Bob Carswell

Kione ny Garee, Gob ny Strona,
Gob yn Ushtey as Stack Mooar –
Shoh ny king ayns Mannin veen
Ta shassoo magh noi niart y vooir.

Gob Ruy bog as Shellag gheinee,
Grine er grine ta geidit voue,
Skeabit ec ny tonnyn mooarey –
Eayninyn vees skellal roue.

Thaloo tuittym, thaloo caillt,
Ta gaalyn marrey jannoo cragh,
Agh goll my-hwoaie er y troo,
Ta Kione ny Hayrey sheeyney magh.

Gob ny Rona, Kione ny Spaainey,
Kione Dhoo, Gob Lhiack as Stroin Vuigh –
Lhig da tonnyn, gatt as freayney,
Rolley stiagh lesh ferg as bree.

Ta ny creggyn scarrey ad
As croo kesh vane ayns coirrey keoie.
Myr shoh, er-ash ta'n faarkey ceaut
As brisht ec king vees shassoo noi.

Ny yeih, ayns Baie ny Carrickey
Ta'n ushtey brishey stiagh lesh pooar.
T'eh soilshit magh dooin ec y cheayn
Nagh vod mayd cur shaghey tidey vooar.

Lesh lajerys as niart as bree
Ta'n thaloo shoh caghlaait dagh laa.
Ayns Ellan beg, t'ayns mean y cheayn,
S'mooar ta'n faarkey ayns nyn mea.

The Ocean

Translation by author

Kione ny Garee, Gob ny Strona,
Gob yn Ushtey and Stack Mooar –
These are the heads in dear Mannin
That stand out against the might of the sea.

Soft Gob Ruy and sandy Shellag,
Grain after grain is stolen from them,
Swept by the large waves –
Cliffs which are disappearing.

Land falling, land lost,
Sea gales are causing destruction,
But going northward on the flow,
The Point of Ayre is extending outward.

Gob ny Rona, Spanish Head,
Black Head, Gob Lhiack and Stroin Vuigh –
Let the waves, swelling and fretting,
Roll in with spite and energy.

The rocks split them
And create white foam in a wild cauldron.
So, back is the sea-swell thrown
And broken by heads which stand opposed.

But yet, in Bay ny Carrickey
The water breaks in with power.
It is set forth to us by the sea
That we cannot parry the great tide.

With strength and might and energy
This land is transformed each day.
In a small Island, in the middle of the sea,
Great is the sea-swell in our life.

O Ben Mynydd Llangyndeyrn

Aneirin Karadog

Rwy'n euog o hyn fy hun, weithiau.

Pan gamaf ar dir newydd
o gyfleustra awyren a gwelaf eiriau
ar arwyddion sy'n herio fy llygaid,
mae tollborth pasbort fy meddwl
yn pallu gadael i'w hystyron
na'u seiniau ddod yn fyw ar dafod
ac fe'u taflaf i'r neilltu gyda sbwriel fy nhaith.

Ond gwn o gerdded y tiroedd
sy'n sibrdw ffiniau fy milltir sgwâr
fod berfau'n aredig caeau
a brwydrau'n creithio bryniau
a bod tywysogion
yn coroni copaon.

O ben mynydd Llangyndeyrn
mae'n hawdd dychmygu Arthur
yn galw ei farchogion i gynnal cyngor
o gylch y graig a elwir heddiw'n Fwrdd Arthur.
Hawdd dychmygu sut y swynwyd y Normaniaid
gan anturiaethau Culhwch yn hela *sanglier*
a gadael y gair yn y tir i dyfu'n llecyn
lle saif cerflun o'r Twrch Trwyth heddiw, yn San Clêr.

Mor hawdd hefyd yw prynu hen ffermdy
a chwmpo mewn cariad â '*Buttercup Meadow*'
gan chwythu canrifoedd o ystyr hen enw
amhosib i'w ynganu bant yn hadau gwawn ar y gwynt.

O ben mynydd Llangyndeyrn
gwelaf ffaldau'r bythynnod a'r *small holdings*
sy'n troi'r tir a phlannu llysiau organig,
yr hen dai newydd lle, efallai, nad yw eu perchnogion
yn deall fod taflu hen eiriau treigledig i'r tip
fel plannu poteli plastig *Dr Pepper* a chaniau *Coca-cola*
yn rhychau'r caeau o Gwmisfael i Fynydd Cerrig.

O ben mynydd Llangyndeyrn
gallaf glywed y sgwrs rhwng Carn Ingli
a Phen Pyrrod ar gorn gwlad y gwynt. Ac wrth i awyren
gynffoni heibio, hawdd dychmygu
fy mhlant yn dewis cario'r baich
o gofio pwy ydyn nhw pan fyddaf
innau wedi camu i'r Awyren Olaf.

From Llangyndeyrn Mountain

Translation by author

I'm guilty of this myself, sometimes.

When I step onto new land
from an aeroplane's convenience and I see words
on signs that challenge my eyes,
the passport control of my mind
refuses to let their meaning
or their sounds to come alive on the tongue
and I throw them aside with the litter of my journey.

But I know from walking the land
that whispers the boundaries of my square mile
that verbs plough fields
and battles scar hills
and that princes
crown the peaks.

From Llangyndeyrn mountain
it is easy to imagine Arthur
calling his knights to hold council
around the rock that is known today as Bwrdd Arthur.
It is easy to imagine how the Normans were captivated
by the adventures of Culhwch hunting *sanglier*
and leave the word to grow in the place
where stands today a statue of the Twrch Trwyth, in Saint Clears.

It is so easy also to buy an old farmhouse
and fall in love with '*Buttercup Meadow*'
by blowing centuries of an old name's meaning
that's impossible to pronounce away as dandy lion seeds on the wind.

From Llangyndeyrn mountain
I see the cottages and their pens and small holdings
that turn the land and plant organic vegetables,
the old new houses where, maybe, their proprietors
don't understand that throwing old mutated words away to the tip
is akin to planting plastic Dr Pepper bottles and Coca-Cola cans
in the furrows of fields from Cwmisfael to Mynydd Cerrig.

From Llangyndeyrn mountain
I can hear the discourse between Carn Ingli
and Pen Pyrrod on the wind's fanfare. And as a plane
tails past, it is easy to imagine
my children choosing to carry the burden
of remembering who they are when I
myself have stepped onto the Final Aeroplane.

Des Sources

Yan Marquis

Arroutànt brâment d'Fermoïn,
j'passaon daonc lé Nez, au Bec,
lé Moulin Huet, et pis Soïnts;
l'iaoue avaou, a couorait.

Arrêtànt ilo, du païssaon
et d'sa vieille Biche nou oué;
ch'est d'tché qui vaout, caontaon!
L'ôlure avaou couorait.

R'maontànt pour lé Ptit Bôt,
nou r'dévâle l'ava bétaôt,
les siroïnes hântent par ilo;
source és chànts, véy-ous les roulaos.

Les douits vaersent des brins avaou,
és terres navigueraient-i?
taïs qu'pieuvre, nou 'n vé pus putaôt,
et les membres peuvent s'ent'tni.

Mais d'vânt qué d'rimaï au plloïn,
il est d'métchier d'débâttaï
l'Gouffer qu'engouffre, grâce au caoup d'moïn,
les naoms s'dérocquent, eche assaiz?

Virànt d'viaers lé Vouêt du Su,
a débouche prés d'la Lague, au Cro,
ou'est qu'i crâchaient bian goulu;
i'y a l'bouan, mais l'ma au dalot!

Rarroutànt lé laong d'la caôte,
miaette moulu nou fait d'l'avânt,
au Douit du Moulin, et d's aoutes,
bouans baïllaeux d'vie ichin d'vânt.

Pernànt tchiques engàmbaïes
à la Perelle ou'est qu'tànt douits,
qui s'étaient rencontraïs,
vaervent en issues, divaers mais eunis.

V'nànt au Vazon, nou varvotte;
i'y a bouan but pour l'pilote.
Les sources en maire s'en vaont, et par chute cache
peut étout v'ni d'pouques plloïnes, à r'sources qu'nou trache.

Sources

Translation by author

Setting off fervently from Fermain,
we then pass the Nez, with the Bec,
Moulin Huet, and then Saints;
the water was flowing down.

Waiting there, of fishing
and its old Nanny Goat we hear;
that's great, let's tell!
Myths were flowing down.

Climbing back up towards Petit Bôt,
soon we go the slope back down,
sirens visit around here;
source of verse, look at the rollers.

The streams spill droplets down,
to lands would they sail?
such as 'pieuvre', there are more by the way,
and the limbs can hold each other.

But before rhyming full flow,
it is the calling to fight
the Gulf that overwhelms, thanks to the helping hand,
the words are crumbling, is this enough?

Turning towards the West from the South,
it spills out near La Lague, at Le Crocq,
where they used to chatter greatly;
there is the good, but flush away the bad!

Setting off again along the coast,
a little ground down we make progress,
to Le Douit du Moulin, and others,
good lifegivers of old.

Taking a few strides
to Perelle where many streams,
that had met up,
utter from outlets, diverse but united.

Arriving at Vazon, we're getting swamped;
there's a fair way for the pilot.
The sources to sea go out, and by this pathway
can also come bags full, of resources we seek.

Notes o'simmertim

Anne McMaster

It's bonnie thing tae watch wee burds
feed thimsels in tha bak en' o' tha yeir.

They drap frae tha brench,
quïck an' quait an' bricht -
lik th'notes o'simmertim falin' noo.

They pik a seed an' soar tae safetie,
carryin' colour tae th'sky.

They bis shedda noo
agin tha shoartnin' day.

These wee notes o'tha saison.

Tha' las' sang.

The notes of summer

Translation by author

It's a beautiful thing to watch small birds
feed themselves in the autumn.

They drop from the branch -
quick and quiet and bright -
like the notes of summer falling now.

They pick a seed and soar to safety,
carrying colour to the sky.

They are as shadows now
against the shortening day.

These small notes of the season.

The last song.

Contributors

Kathleen Jamie is a poet and essayist, writing in English and Scots. She was Professor of Poetry the University of Stirling from 2010-20. In August 2021, Jamie was appointed as the fourth holder of the title of Scotland's Makar (national poet).

Dairena Ní Chinnéide is an Irish poet and former broadcast journalist, interpreter, television producer and mother. She has published 11 books of mainly bilingual poetry and has received numerous awards for her writing. She was nominated Poet Laureate for Listowel during the Poetry Ireland initiative, Poetrytown 2021.

Peter Mackay (Pàdraig MacAoidh) is a native Gaelic speaker from the Isle of Lewis and a poet, writer, academic and broadcaster. Mackay works in the School of English at the University of St Andrews. He has previously held posts at the Séamus Heaney Centre for Poetry, Queen's University Belfast; Trinity College Dublin; and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.

Geraint Jennings is a linguist and a teacher of Jèrriais. In 2007, he won first place "for the best short story in Norman" at the Fête Nouormande in Bricquebec for his story "La frontchièthe". He also won first place in 2008 for his story entitled "Feu et feunmée" and some of his Jèrriais poems have been selected as set pieces for performance at the Jersey Eisteddfod.

Taran Spalding-Jenkin is a bilingual Cornish poet and storyteller, and has been commissioned for theatre and radio. In 2023 their debut poetry pamphlet *Health Hireth* was published by Broken Sleep Books.

Bob Carswell is a Manx language and culture activist, writer and radio presenter. In 2013 he received the Manx Heritage Foundation's Reih Bleeaney Vanannan award for outstanding contributions to Manx culture. In 2010 he edited *Manannan's Cloak: An Anthology of Manx Literature*.

Aneirin Karadog is a poet, broadcaster, performer and linguist, and was the Children's Laureate of Wales 2013 -2015. He was the winner of the Chair at the National Eisteddfod, 2016.

Jan (Yan) Marquis is native of Guernsey, he learnt Guernesiais as a second language has since become involved in its teaching, promotion, and research. Yan is a published author in Guernesiais and also consults on the language. In 2008 he moved from a career in IT to become Guernsey's first Language Support Officer.

Anne McMaster spent several years teaching in California and travelling the US before returning to Northern Ireland to lecture in English Literature and Performing Arts, develop original projects and write/direct theatre productions. She now works as a poet, professional voice actor, editor, project designer and international creative writing mentor.

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