

# Changing Verses In Midstream

A Poetry NI collection  
for National Poetry Day 2018



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## Contents:

4. Orla Fay : *The Other Side of Eden*
5. Trudie Gorman : *'That day I wore a red dress and bled'*
6. David Braziel : *Fifty Autumns*
7. Glen Wilson : *In One Rotation of the Globe*
8. Siobhan Atkins : *The Nature of Change*
9. Peter Adair : *Blink*
10. Jane Robinson : *When*
11. Jessamine O'Connor : *The Planter*
12. Geraldine O'Kane : *Irish Weavers*
13. K.S. Moore : *Massage*
14. Trish Bennett : *Bitches*
15. Colin Dardis : *After Grenfell*
16. Andrew Roycroft : *Middle*
17. Rosie Burrows : *Home leg, Belfast*
18. Year 10 poems from The Archer Academy

## The Other Side of Eden

I can picture the two of us there,  
On a picnic blanket, mugs of tea in hand  
On a fine spring's day,  
Orpheus looking at Eurydice  
Knowing that the past is behind us.  
I haven't given up nor lost faith.  
I've chased her 'til she is mine.  
I'd like to give up all the demons:  
Centaur, Gorgons, Chimera, Harpies  
And that old dog Cerberus.  
Give two fingers to Charon on the Styx!

**Orla Fay**

## **'That day I wore a red dress and bled'**

That day I wore a red dress and bled  
for the first time in months and  
I knew things  
like,  
red is my colour.  
And  
blood is sacred,  
and sacred is just another word for  
woman.

I knew the change of seasons and stories because  
they rippled inside me.  
I knew  
how all things end,  
die  
and flourish again.

**Trudie Gorman**

## **Fifty Autumns**

I have always loved October  
the rich red soup of it  
the cardigan comfort  
the scarf long nights  
the air sharp with stories  
the trees dropping verse  
but this year  
the clock ticks louder  
the shadows hold more weight  
the cold pricks at my eyes and  
the gunpowder in the wind  
tastes like a warning.

**David Brazier**

## In One Rotation of the Globe

A hundred and fifty thousand die each day  
to be replaced by three hundred and sixty thousand new-borns  
and each one is a book of poems in themselves.

There is time today to find God, find yourself,  
find a cure, find the one you love  
when you least expect it, find out there is more to find.

Everything changes with each refreshing of an eye;  
kick the habit, pull a rabbit from a hat,  
bang the drum, sing the song, become the change.

And if you feel the darkness of a night is staying too long, wait,  
just wait with me amongst the beeps of our technology,  
for the light returns, and changes everything again.

**Glen Wilson**

## The Nature of Change

I looked up change in the dictionary,  
it told me something was different.  
I liked it better when you liked me better.  
I asked my boss at work about change,  
they told me to embrace it,  
but I liked it better when you liked me better.  
So I asked my oldest friend,  
the wise old owl,  
and she told me change is the only given.  
But still, I liked it better when you liked me better.

**Siobhan Atkins**



## **Blink**

In passing the hazel catkins catch my eye  
in passing that apple glances from the grass  
in passing I chance on dogs men trees  
in passing fast faster fastest  
in passing like a fish flitting to a hook  
in passing each of you and everything  
a glint in my eye vanishing.

**Peter Adair**

## When

Change leaves no space for starlings and robins,  
and even the dictionaries decree nature is  
obsolete, when the machine has grubbed out  
hedges and hedge-schools, dog-roses and sloes,  
when we have broken the barometer, melted the  
ice, set the arctic on fire, when a cold wind blows  
in off the shore and our moorings don't hold any  
more, when men fight men and destroy  
everything for ever, and we are weary and  
battered by change –

each song  
holds a lark  
in its throat

**Jane Robinson**

## The Planter

He's here now, digging the hole for me,  
planting the oak, banking it up,  
stamping down mud with unlaced boots  
and we're cackling over something  
I will never remember.

Laughing now at the tree, that reaches up  
into power lines which were always overhead,  
and every few years the maintenance men come  
to cut it short, and he's been dead  
for almost as long as I've known him.

**Jessamine O'Connor**

## **Irish Weavers**

We weave our tongues through  
crude intricacies using definite words:  
'the Troubles' and 'poetry'.  
Mid flow I am distracted  
by a kamikaze leaf  
skimming shadow from  
the building opposite.  
I point it out to you,  
we let its spiralling  
silence us into autumn.

**Geraldine O'Kane**

## Message

A stone settles its weight at my shoulder,  
an advocate for peace, trills its way  
along my spine, lulls each muscle  
to warm repose; if anyone speaks  
it is this stone.

**K.S. Moore**

## **Bitches**

I'm in sync with my best friend — not the band,  
although I can sing, we both bark.

Herself's been fertile twice this year.  
The kraken's been released in me,

my barely used womb in a tailspin  
with the one ovary left, on the right

in the twist of a slow crease that's spread  
to my head, body and bed.

My friend snores beside as I write. The pair of us,  
our tails tucked between our legs.

Herself's coming into heat,  
while I'm going off the boil.

**Trish Bennett**

## After Grenfell

"The fire safety measures you outline are additional rather than essential." As if fire is fictional and only dreams can catch fire. We watched people burn and saw a government extinguish in return.

"It is the landlord's responsibility to ensure that people are safe." Security must be secured by your voice and your vote; if you want to raise an eye, burn a banknote.

"Support will not include general improvement and enhancements to buildings." We need movement and we need faith: We can't stop believing that the value of another human being is worth less than a sprinkler system; if this is now custom, we must condemn.

*The quotes are by Housing Minister Alok Sharma, addressed to the City Councils of Nottingham, Croydon, and Wandsworth respectively.  
[www.theguardian.com/society/2017/oct/06/ministers-refusing-pay-improvements-fire-safety-grenfell](http://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/oct/06/ministers-refusing-pay-improvements-fire-safety-grenfell)*

**Colin Dardis**

## Middle

We never longed for the end of green  
until with scarlet plumage, feathered gold,  
Autumn sang summer's swan song, extolled,  
in new found notes and stormy breath,  
the drowsy hours before hoary frost,  
the beauty of a middling place not lost  
in livid sap and rage of day but mild  
and ready to give a little to the passing breeze.  
When these days came on, the red ivied wall,  
the trails swelling with cast off crimson rags,  
we gloried in what it was to change,  
to yield, find rhythm, to see in season's death  
the ripening of clearer days, of easy Fall.

**Andrew Roycroft**



## Home leg, Belfast

On the home leg we surrendered.  
Surrendered to other -  
to more than  
human help.

Exhausted from repeating scales.  
Our own, each other's frenemies.  
Choosing the unknown frontier.  
Choosing to recognize each, every  
primitive edge, survival strategy.

Each fight

Every flight

Each freeze

Even, please.

**Rosie Burrows**

## Year 10 poems from The Archer Academy

*The Archer Academy in East Finchley, North London, held a half-hour writing session with some of their students, responding to our submission call. All the poems below are from its Year 10 pupils. Thank you to librarian Gill Wolfe for submitting these on the children's behalf!*

### **The clock keeps me prisoner**

The clock keeps ticking and I just follow  
 Everyone is changing yet I am permanently attached  
 to the watchful eye of two plastic hands  
 But one day I will have to replace the battery  
 and I don't think I will cope

**Isabella Conyngham-Francis**

~~~

### **Underground**

I sit here in the underground,  
 And hear the thunderous feet above.  
 If I could escape and look at the sky,  
 I know once again I could love

But I loved too little, and too long ago  
 And now underground as I hear the Earth turn  
 I know it is too late to change once again  
 So here for my sins I shall burn.

**Leon Appelquist**

The ground shook quickly  
A new war had started  
Death moved swiftly  
Families were parted.

A new wave of tyranny rose  
A mistake was made  
The battlefield was littered with crows  
And in the blood of the casualties war had bathed.

But there will be a time  
When change shall rise  
It is through this crime  
That peace has died.

**A.K.**

~~~

I want to change  
But I'm stuck in a cage  
I want to be who I used to be  
It sounds so simple  
Gosh I feel so little  
I want to change  
But I can't find the key for the cage.

**Melina Matthews**

Change what does it mean?  
 My brother he just came clean.  
 Mum now, quite mean. Change.  
 Hop on bus need change.  
 Going to the shooting range  
 Now he's dead. Need change.  
 I'm afraid, afraid of change.  
 I don't know what's happening  
 Change, keep on going, stop?  
 After your reality, fit your needs or not  
 When change comes, change.  
 Do it, you have no choice. Change.  
 Before it's too late. Change.

**A.S.**

~~~

With my change I buy some food  
 That completely changes my mood  
 I buy some meat  
 Then I take a seat  
 It really tasted good

**D.L.**

~~~

I don't want to change  
 It makes me very confused  
 But I do have to

**Mattia Paganelli**

**Thank you for reading!**

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