

The Royal Society
of Literature



PEACE POETRY

RSL poets mark the centenary of Wilfred Owen's death



*'Boys
Bursting the
surface of the
ebony pond.'*

*Flashes
of shimmers
carving thro'
the sparkling cold.'*

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FOREWORD

In his poem 'From My Diary, July 1914', Wilfred Owen recalls a time before war, with

Bees

Shaking the heavy dew from bloom and frond.

Boys

Bursting the surface of the ebony pond.

Flashes

Of swimmers carving thro' the sparkling cold.

Fleashes

Gleaming with wetness to the morning gold.

Owen's watery idyll would conclude in November 1918 in quite a different body of water, when the poet died, one week before the Armistice, on the banks of the Oise-Sambre Canal, near Ors, northern France. He was 25 years old.

Wilfred Owen is remembered now as one of the foremost of a generation of soldier-poets. He was one of millions who perished in the bloodied mud of France and Belgium, leaving in his verse words to honour the dead, and to urge political leaders to ensure that these losses, this suffering of war, were not repeated. In winter 2018, at the closing of commemorations of the First World War, it is this lasting power of poetry to bear witness to suffering and implore future peace that the

Royal Society of Literature celebrates. In this pamphlet, RSL poet Fellows have written new poems of peace, poems that remember the First World War and many wars since. In them, we find violence met with birdsong, the politics of power set against passion for a better world, Owen's last mud-drenched weeks restored to the waters of his youth.

Interspersed with our Fellows' poems are Owen's own, marking the ravages of war and entreating peace. While we cannot measure the effect Owen's words have had in the century since his death, the poems here, in response to his work, his life and his subjects, mark further generations of hope. Our poets strive to guide us to a better future, to return us from negotiations of violence and rage, as swimmers in "the sparkling cold", out beneath "the shimmering trees".

Molly Rosenberg

Director

Royal Society of Literature

The Swimmer

Helen Mort

In his book 'RisingTideFallingStar', Philip Hoare describes Wilfred Owen's lifelong love of swimming, particularly his connection to the waters near Torquay. His father, Tom Owen, hoped Wilfred might have a life at sea and taught him to swim at the age of six. Swimming remained a source of comfort and inspiration throughout Wilfred's life.

I am only a boy
in the lone cove
beyond Meadfoot

only a shape
short body long fringe
as rocks are fastidious shapes

as the sea is a tidal
shape a restless hand
long-opened to the afternoon

its scattered rain I am
naked light as the quartz-
white of breaking foam

I take wolf-steps
down to the place
the water touches me

and there is always
a point to swim to
beyond the gull's view

beyond the depth
that Keats saw
too far into

but my chest
is blanched driftwood
carried like bark

I know only one distance
and as I swim the land
is not a cup of war

Dover Salisbury Plain
all drowned
there is nothing

under the sea
but me with
my held breath

counting to ten
a plane a bird
casting its shadow overhead

Futility

Wilfred Owen

Move him into the sun –
Gently its touch awoke him once,
At home, whispering of fields half-sown.
Always it woke him, even in France,
Until this morning and this snow.
If anything might rouse him now
The kind old sun will know.

Think how it wakes the seeds –
Woke once the clays of a cold star.
Are limbs, so dear achieved, are sides
Full-nerved, still warm, too hard to stir?
Was it for this the clay grew tall?
– O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
To break earth's sleep at all?

White Sheets

Ian Duhig

I am driving towards Ripon
where Owen wrote 'Futility'
another May a century ago
before his last tour to France.

My own road falls between
sheets of hawthorn blossom
as if the snow drifted here
from Wilfred Owen's poem.

At Coxwold I stopped to see
in the Shandy Hall collection
its 'Tristram Shandy' edition
designed for soldiers' pockets

and thought about Uncle Toby,
that warrior as gentle as Owen,
the white page of Toby's love
and Owen's unwritten poems,

their shrouds of white paper
blank as my mind as I drive,
the worm in my brain a song
for another soldier, for them all,

'The Green Fields of France':
*. . . But the sorrow, the suffering,
the glory, the shame, the killing
and dying was all done in vain,*

*for young Willie McBride
it all happened again,
and again, and again,
and again, and again . . .*

On the Sambre Canal

Gillian Clarke

Here on the bridge, silence is the white stone
on his grave, when the something we call soul
had gone. The canal is a page of slow
unscrolling waterlight, unwritten.

His last night, writing home while his men slept,
he dreamed a future beyond war and sorrow,
before they crossed the water, before they wept
crying their mothers' name, before the crow

had dipped its beak in blood, before the birds
fed on beloved flesh. One week – one week
before the Armistice, before his words
sang to the weeping world, and still they speak.

Unsilenced, poetry sings in the mind,
his lines on water whispered by the wind.

The Spring

Pascale Petit

I went to the water barrel
fed by our spring
and saw, on the black surface –

a wolf-cloud, a scythe moon,

plunged my hands in to scoop
slivers of my face
braided with spirit-of-mountain.

Then I heard a wild boar
cornered by hounds

in the innocent wood,
the primeval wood

where holm oaks
tried to muffle the sound.

*

Then there was news, always
the same news –

forests of headlines
no one should read,

I washed the print from my eyes.

What could I do but cup
the water tenderly,
let the syllables
speak,

tell me how it circles the globe,
sees nation gouge at nation
like river at rock.

I'd like to say the radio went quiet,
that the papers now tell leaf-stories
of blackbirds' quarrels with sparrows,

that the pages rolled back into trees,
and the front page is bark.

*

I went to the water barrel
fed by our spring
and saw, on the black surface –

a hawk turn into a missile,
the moon on fire.

Fox-scream and hare-scream
streamed from my mouth.

I scooped slivers of my face
braided with viper.

Then I heard children
cornered by soldiers

in the innocent wood,
the primeval wood

where burnt oaks
tried to muffle the sound.

I dived into the barrel
and breathed through a straw

while armies searched caves
where refugees cowered.

I prayed for oxygen.

From my mouth poured
birdsong,
leaf-light,
a rain

of musical notes, a hymn to peace.

An Unseen

Carol Ann Duffy

I watched love leave, turn, wave, want not to go,
depart, return;
late spring, a warm slow blue of air, old-new.
Love was here; not; missing, love was there;
each look, first, last.

Down the quiet road, away, away, towards
the dying time,
love went, brave soldier, the song dwindling;
walked to the edge of absence; all moments going,
gone; bells through rain

to fall on the carved names of the lost.
I saw love's child uttered,
unborn, only by rain, then and now, all future
past, an unseen. Has forever been then? Yes,
forever has been.

The Send-Off

Wilfred Owen

Down the close darkening lanes they sang their way
To the siding-shed,
And lined the train with faces grimly gay.

Their breasts were stuck all white with wreath and spray
As men's are, dead.

Dull porters watched them, and a casual tramp
Stood staring hard,
Sorry to miss them from the upland camp.

Then, unmoved, signals nodded, and a lamp
Winked to the guard.

So secretly, like wrongs hushed-up, they went.
They were not ours:
We never heard to which front these were sent;

Nor there if they yet mock what women meant
Who gave them flowers.

Shall they return to beating of great bells
In wild train-loads?
A few, a few, too few for drums and yells,

May creep back, silent, to village wells,
Up half-known roads.

The Few

Michael Symmons Roberts

*A few, a few, too few for drums and yells, / May creep back, silent, to
village wells, / Up half-known roads – The Send-Off, Wilfred Owen*

Dig out those filled-in wells,
unseal the city's sluices, lever up the lids,
divine the waterways that swell
under tarmac, brick and mud,

break them open, let them run
down the spines of your high streets,
through your kitchens, lift the cast-iron
grids that keep

the underworld from ours.
We have been travelling home for years,
map-less, no hope of a compass,
so little left we recognise –

landmarks gone, desire paths redrawn,
roads renamed, no haunts,
no bells to strike the note of home.
Lure us with the scent

of what we miss, beds of sediment,
the faintest hint of what we knew:
rotted letters long unmeant,
the pursed gourd of a sole-less shoe,

old coats, *Woodbine* roaches, bills,
a smashed-glass phial of Blackpool sand,
the plate-scrapes of a thousand meals,
the compost stink of England.

Home. A word we hold under our tongues,
the half-recounted last verse
of a sentimental song,
this place that wears the badge of *Peace*.

Bear with us,
the scrambled and pale,
who fumble through a rusted clutch of keys
at every viable front door, and fail.

Our names were stolen
one rough sea and four days' march away,
hammered into Portland stone.
Still on our way home, not lost exactly,

us, the sullen, solo travellers,
camouflaged in powdered clay,
a wide-berth shambles,
too tired to pass muster or the time of day,

the one who works the angles down ginnels
and channels and cuts
with pockets full of rusted nails,
trying to trace a route by heart.

Or the sotto-voce hitch-hiker who stops
you on a slip-road with a sign marked *NORTH*,
one hand folds the other in his lap,
a rough stone in his mouth,

a borrowed baseball cap tipped low
against the late west sun,
with no idea how far he has to go.
Or this one, huddled on the last train,

curled up in a parka, sound asleep,
who sips at flat *White Lightning*,
who reads the platform sign at every stop
without ever arriving.

Or those who walk to wire-hedged cliffs,
backpacks chiming with spent rounds,
who trust the birds' instinctual paths,
and fly with seagulls, petrels, terns.

It is taking longer than we thought,
this homecoming.

We parted at the channel ports
lifetimes ago, spared and raring

for home, for recompense,
but then the bends took hold,
and we were stippled, bleached, blenched,
too quick a rise from one world

to the next, too many empty words,
and then a blind-led spiral
down quarter-recalled roads
or tracks unrecognisable.

Now our mind-maps run
to pastel. Too many nights out soaked
in ditches, doorways, days in *Wetherspoons*
back rooms rehearsing plans and hopes.

Heart is no rare compass, just a pump,
a balled and unballied fist,
an ache, vague pull towards home,
a sump of half-remembered tenderness,

some hook-up to a signal
that keeps dropping out, then flickering on,
a beacon on a distant hill,
sputtering, then flaring strong.

It's you we hum those songs about,
not some camaraderie in death.
As if you meant to weigh us down
you hung these wreaths around our necks.

We won't give up. We've come too far.
If that means stolen boots,
thumbed silent lifts, begged fares,
then so be it.

The word *peace* like a promissory note,
walled garden run to seed,
fishbone that catches in your throat,
kin to *species*, *specious*, *please*.

My poem is an attempt to look at Owen (an intensely anti-jingoistic poet) and his legacy at a time when the co-opting of the World Wars has become part of a resurgent and nostalgic nationalism. It's a dramatic monologue in the voice of one of Owen's ghostly broken returnees. It seeks to elegise those soldiers and their longing for peace.

Ors

Michael Longley

I
I am standing on the canal bank at Ors
Willing Wilfred Owen to make it across
To the other side where his parents wait.
He and his men are constructing pontoons.
The German sniper doesn't know his poetry.

II
My daughter Rebecca lives in twenty-four
Saint Bernard's Crescent opposite the home
Wilfred visited for "perfect little dinners"
And "extraordinary fellowship in all the arts".
I can hear him on his way to the Steinthals.

III
Last year I read my own poems at Craiglockhart
And eavesdropped on Robert, Siegfried, Wilfred
Whispering about poetry down the corridors.
If Wilfred can concentrate a little longer,
He might just make it to the other bank.

Dulce et Decorum Est

Wilfred Owen

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind.

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys! – An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime. –
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud

Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues, –
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.*

*Sweet and honorable is it
To die for your country.

Battle

Grace Nichols

Now on the sea-bed of childbirth
she gripped the iron railings
silently calling on her mother
and all the gods to help her –

Wave after wave
of shining pain breaking upon her –
Her body an exhausted ship working
its way past the long haul of the siren's music –

O why can't the blood-gifted child spring from a rib
or burst like Athena from a father's forehead?

In her delirious distress, as each contraction
flares her back and gasps her breath
she thinks she sees Death
in the killing fields, beyond the water-lights.

In the end, anchoring deep
in the inner trenches of herself –
just wanting it over and done with –
She pushed Death back into the cupboard
and pushed Life – into the world.

Now years on, a grieving mother she reflects;
“Was it for this, that I endured what I endured,
to see the life I reared, my body's dearest
fed to the jaws of some unwanted bloody Troy,
primed with promises of sweet rewards?
O generations of lost sons!
My eyes the only flowers for an unknown grave.”

Naw dros heddwch

Menna Elfyn

*(heddychwyr Catonsville yn eu plith beirdd-offeiriaid
Daniel a Philip Berrigan 17 eg o Fai 1968, Maryland)*

Gyfeillion mae'n ddrwg gennym
ymyrryd â threfn dda,
llosgi papurau yn lle plantos
a'n salm mewn napalm dros nos –
ni allem wneud fel arall,
a Fiet-Nam yn wenfflam o wae.

Doed dy deyrnas oedd y weddi dawel
a rannem cyn i lys roi gwŷs
a gefynnau yn ôl y gofyn
gan roi taw ar lawen weithred.
Cysgu'n drwm y noson honno
a'r difrod i'r drafftiau
yn codi'n fflwcs mewn ffurfafen.

Naw dros heddwch ein ple
yn erbyn iaith unieithog
a'r trais a'i lais am ladd
gwerin a'i gwarineb.

Nine for peace

*(‘Catonsville nine’ peace activists including poet-priests
Daniel and Philip Berrigan, 17 May 1968, Maryland)*

Because if this seems disruptive –
comrades we apologise –
incinerating draft papers
instead of infants
with our home-made napalm
because with Vietnam
such a bloody conflagration
we think it's imperative

because we shared the Lord's Prayer
quietly before court –
our shackles ensuring silence
no-one should pity us
because we slept that night
dreaming a desert of ashen earth

because we nine pledged
with heaven on earth our plea
each voice a step closer to peace
because countless wend to war
towards sunset without sanctuary
restless and unrecorded
honest folk ripped away from their roots

Ac ymhob oes daw bardd
i gignoethi coethni pob cerdd.

O oes i oes bydd croesau
yn rhoi o'r newydd
heriau

ni ddylem wneud fel arall.

because men can be vicious
our language teems with violent verbs
but trust the poet
to spoil death's party
using words that challenge war's hardware
and memories of its maiming

because hellfire we must learn
is more than a missile
but such is its accursedness
that its lesson leaves us no choice

but to be is because

Translated from the Welsh by Robert Minhinnick

Come to the River

Fiona Sampson

The sky is luminous
and so's the vitreous
humour of my eye
on which two warplanes skid
like floaters

following a river
through farmland they
don't defend
valleys and fields fat
on fair weather

good luck stacked
and baled like hay
right to the water-
brink that shivers back
its dream version –

reversed
cattle and pasture shake
and old patterns fragment
through water
where a skimmed stone

skipping across the surface
to bruise its dark polish
leaves you
empty handed
your arm upraised

in strange salute
for the suddenly
empty valley
the sky the lengthening
shadows there behind you

Smile, Smile, Smile

Wilfred Owen

Head to limp head, the sunk-eyed wounded scanned
Yesterday's *Mail*; the casualties (typed small)
And (large) Vast Booty from our Latest Haul.
Also, they read of Cheap Homes, not yet planned,
"For," said the paper, "when this war is done
The men's first instincts will be making homes.
Meanwhile their foremost need is aerodromes,
It being certain war has just begun.
Peace would do wrong to our undying dead, –
The sons we offered might regret they died
If we got nothing lasting in their stead.
We must be solidly indemnified.
Though all be worthy Victory which all bought,
We rulers sitting in this ancient spot
Would wrong our very selves if we forgot
The greatest glory will be theirs who fought,
Who kept this nation in integrity."
Nation? – The half-limbed readers did not chafe
But smiled at one another curiously
Like secret men who know their secret safe.

(This is the thing they know and never speak,
That England one by one had fled to France,
Not many elsewhere now, save under France.)
Pictures of these broad smiles appear each week,
And people in whose voice real feeling rings
Say: How they smile! They're happy now, poor things.

Peace < Water

Sabrina Mahfouz

Dunkirk salt spray seals my cavities
rotten roots a botanical legacy
of Somme River weeds.
Rote learn those ruptured dates, GCSE palm sweats.
Politics seminar role-play, David Lloyd George.
Autumn pound coins for poppies.

From my Whitehall office window,
cenotaph inscribes sacrifices wreathed every day
I cry proudly for their creases.
Training to be a defence intelligence officer
the interrogator asks me;

Are you not made of Suez silt?
How do we know you won't shore our boats
by making yourself bigger than we made you?
Thames. Suez. The Nile, too.
What greedy hydrology you have?

Actually, we shouldn't conflate rivers with canals
I say, but this can't help my cause.
British intelligence always tells water what to do.

Sun slants in, I dip my biscuit;
Look sir, I want to make the world a better place,
peace-keep with the nuance of my name.
His smirk between beige mac lapels;
But we do not work for the world, my dear.

Wilfred Owen: November 4, 1918

Paul Muldoon

What I had taken for the warble of a bird
now had me brood
on those finch- and nuthatch-furtive hedgerows
of my dreamed-of childhood, kedgeriee
and eggs-and-soldiers on parade
at breakfast, a parrot
quick-stepping along its perch,
a creeping barrage
of rain, *pace* Siegfried Sassoon,
whereby every season was monsoon season,
rain falling back on itself
when threatened with a counter-salvo
from the chestnut-trees
and, worst of all, my dearies,
casting a pall over our afternoon game of tennis,
the decapitated Saint Denis
bearing his head before him like a cooling cake,
like an apricot-breast borne by the brambling or “cock
o’ the north”.
Now I wondered how on earth
what I took for the warble of a bird
might, in fact, be a duckboard
twittering underfoot
as I embarked on a final feat
of balance across the gurgle
of mud, my chest stretched like a coracle
over its willow ribs . . .

In olden times an Irish king would part his robes
and proffer his right nipple
to a subservient noble . . .
I met him just once, Robert Graves,
in the sacred willow-groves
of Midlothian, where he expressed something like guilt
about having to kill his fellow-Celts
from east of the Rhine.
A crater is merely a cup filled with watered-down wine.
Now the Germans have mastered
the deployment of chlorine-gas and mustard-,
I expect the chances are slender
this is not, in fact, the whistle from a gas-cylinder
that bruits and noises itself abroad
but the warble, my dearies, the warble of a bird.

The Next War

Wilfred Owen

*War's a joke for me and you,
While we know such dreams are true.*

– Siegfried Sassoon

Out there, we walked quite friendly up to Death, –
Sat down and ate beside him, cool and bland, –
Pardoned his spilling mess-tins in our hand.
We've sniffed the green thick odour of his breath, –
Our eyes wept, but our courage didn't writhe.
He's spat at us with bullets, and he's coughed
Shrapnel. We chorused if he sang aloft,
We whistled while he shaved us with his scythe.

Oh, Death was never enemy of ours!
We laughed at him, we leagued with him, old chum.
No soldier's paid to kick against His powers.
We laughed, – knowing that better men would come,
And greater wars: when every fighter brags
He fights on Death, for lives; not men, for flags.

From My Diary, July 1914

Wilfred Owen

Leaves
Murmuring by miriads in the shimmering trees.
Lives
Wakening with wonder in the Pyrenees.
Birds
Cheerily chirping in the early day.
Bards
Singing of summer, scything thro' the hay.
Bees
Shaking the heavy dew from bloom and frond.
Boys
Bursting the surface of the ebony pond.
Flashes
Of swimmers carving thro' the sparkling cold.
Fleshes
Gleaming with wetness to the morning gold.
A mead
Bordered about with warbling water brooks.
A maid
Laughing the love-laugh with me; proud of looks.
The heat
Throbbing between the upland and the peak.
Her heart
Quivering with passion to my pressed cheek.

WILFRED OWEN: A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Braiding

Of floating flames across the mountain brow.

Brooding

Of stillness; and a sighing of the bough.

Stirs

Of leaflets in the gloom; soft petal-showers;

Stars

Expanding with the starr'd nocturnal flowers.

On 11 November 1918, as Armistice bells pealed out over England, the doorbell rang in a modest house in Shrewsbury, and a couple took delivery of a telegram. A week before, leading troops across the Oise-Sambre Canal, their son Wilfred had been killed. Just 25, he would in time be regarded as one of the leading poets of the First World War.

Wilfred Owen was born, the eldest of four children, on 18 March 1893, near Oswestry in Shropshire. He used to claim that he first became aware of his vocation as a poet when he was still very young, on holiday with his mother – whom he adored – in Cheshire in 1904.

When the First World War broke out, Owen delayed joining up – as a poet, he believed, he was more valuable alive than dead. Even when he finally enlisted, on 21 October 1915, it may have been poetry that moved him to do so. He quoted a remark by Vigny: “If any man despairs of becoming a Poet, let him carry his pack and march in the ranks.”

After training, he was sent to France in 1916, during the worst winter of the war, and the following spring, suffering from shell shock, was invalided out to Craiglockhart War Hospital near Edinburgh. Here, by day, he poured his energies into writing poetry, while by night he was the victim of violent ‘war dreams’ which were to plague him for the rest of his life.

In August 1917, Owen introduced himself to Siegfried

Sassoon, also a patient at Craiglockhart. With Sassoon's encouragement, he began to write poems bringing alive the horrors of the trenches and gas warfare: 'Dulce et Decorum Est', 'Insensibility', 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', 'Futility', 'Spring Offensive', 'Strange Meeting'. Sassoon also introduced him to other poets, notably Robert Graves. Towards the end of 1917, Owen wrote to his mother: "I go out of this year a Poet, my dear Mother, as which I did not enter it . . . I am a poet's poet. I am started. The tugs have left me; I feel the great swelling of the open sea taking my galleon."

In the summer of 1918, Siegfried Sassoon, once more fighting in France, was sent home with a serious head wound. Owen, feeling the need for a poet of Sassoon's calibre at the Front, again crossed the channel. He was killed on 4 November 1918. In his last letter to his mother, he had quoted Rabindranath Tagore: "When I go from hence let this be my parting word, that what I have seen is unsurpassable."

Maggie Fergusson

Literary Adviser
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**NOTES
ON
CONTRIBUTORS**

Gillian Clarke, National Poet of Wales from 2008 to 2016, is President of Tŷ Newydd, the National Writing Centre of Wales. She has received the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry 2010, the Wilfred Owen Poetry Award 2012 and the Hay Festival Poetry Medal 2016. Picador published her *Selected Poems* in 2016. Her latest collection is *Zoology* (Carcenet, 2017).

Carol Ann Duffy has been described as the poet of "post-post war England: Thatcher's England". Since May 2009 she has been Britain's Poet Laureate – the first woman, the first Scot and the first openly gay person in the role's 400-year history. Her themes include gender, contemporary culture, alienation, oppression and social inequality. She has said that she likes to use "simple words, but in a complicated way", and her deceptively straightforward style has won her a wide readership – from critics and academics to school students.

Ian Duhig has written seven books of poetry, most recently *The Blind Roadmaker* (Picador, 2016), a Poetry Book Society Recommendation, shortlisted for the Roehampton, Forward Best Collection and T.S. Eliot prizes. He works with musicians, artists and socially excluded groups, recently editing *Any Change: Poetry in a Hostile Environment*, a poetry anthology from Leeds' immigrant communities. A Cholmondeley Award

recipient, he has won the Forward Best Single Poem Prize once and the National Poetry Competition twice.

Menna Elfyn is an award-winning poet and playwright. She has published fourteen collections of poetry, children's novels and libretti for UK and US composers, and has written plays for radio and television. Her bilingual volume *Murmur* (Bloodaxe, 2012) was selected as Poetry Book Society Recommended Translation. Her Welsh-language biography of the poet Eluned Phillips, *Optimist Absolute* (Honno Press, 2018), was shortlisted for Wales Book of the Year. She is Professor of Poetry at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David and President of Wales PEN Cymru.

Inua Ellams is a poet, playwright and performer. He is a Complete Works alumnus and facilitates workshops in creative writing where he explores recurring themes in his work including identity and displacement. He has written for the Royal Shakespeare Company, the National Theatre and the BBC. His work has won several awards including the Live Canon International Poetry Prize, a Wellcome Trust Award, the Edinburgh Fringe First Award and the Liberty Human Rights Award.

Michael Longley has published eleven poetry collections, the most recent being *Angel Hill* (Cape Poetry, 2017). He has won the Whitbread Poetry Award, the Hawthornden Prize and the T.S. Eliot Prize, and in 2001 received the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. He was appointed CBE in 2010, and from 2007 to 2010 was Ireland Professor of Poetry. He is a Freeman of the City of Belfast. In 2017 he received the PEN Pinter Prize, and in 2018 the inaugural Yakamochi Medal.

Sabrina Mahfouz's work includes the play *Chef* (an Edinburgh Fringe First Award winner), the poetry collection *How You Might Know Me* (Outspoken Press, 2016) and the forthcoming feature film *My Brother Wiley*. She edited the anthology *The Things I Would Tell You: British Muslim Women Write* (Saqi Books, 2017), a Guardian Book of the Year. She is the recipient of the 2018 King's Arts and Culture Alumni Award.

Blake Morrison is a poet, novelist and the author of two bestselling memoirs. He edited *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* with Andrew Motion and has published several collections, including *The Ballad of the Yorkshire Ripper* (Chatto & Windus, 1987) and *Shingle Street* (Chatto & Windus, 2015). His latest book is *The Executor* (Chatto & Windus, 2018), a novel with poems. He is Professor of Creative and Life Writing at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Helen Mort has published two collections with Chatto & Windus. A five-times winner of the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award, she received an Eric Gregory Award in 2007 and her work has been shortlisted for the Costa Book Awards and the T.S. Eliot Prize. In 2010, she became the youngest ever poet-in-residence at the Wordsworth Trust. She was the Derbyshire Poet Laureate from 2013 to 2015.

Paul Muldoon has been described by Roger Rosenblatt, in the *New York Times Book Review*, as "one of the great poets of the past hundred years, who can be everything in his poems – word-playful, lyrical, hilarious, melancholy. And angry. Only Yeats before him could write with such measured fury." The author of twelve major collections of poetry, he served as Poetry Editor of the *New Yorker* from 2007 to 2017.

Grace Nichols's first collection of poetry, *I Is a Long Memored Woman* (Karnak House, 1983), won the 1983 Commonwealth Poetry Prize. Among her other books are *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (Virago, 1984) and *Sunris* (Virago, 1996). She was poet-in-residence at the Tate Gallery, London, from 1999 to 2000 which resulted in her collection *Picasso, I Want My Face Back*. She is among the poets on the current GCSE syllabus and received the Cholmondeley Award in 2001. Her latest book is *The Insomnia Poems* (Bloodaxe, 2017).

Pascale Petit's seventh poetry collection, *Mama Amazonica* (Bloodaxe, 2017), won the RSL Ondaatje Prize, was shortlisted for the Roehampton Prize and was a Poetry Book Society Choice. Her sixth collection, *Fauverie* (Seren, 2014), was her fourth to be shortlisted for the T.S. Eliot Prize and five poems from it won the Manchester Poetry Prize. In 2018 she received an RSL Literature Matters Award.

Fiona Sampson is a prize-winning poet and writer. She has been published in more than thirty languages and was appointed MBE for services to literature in 2017. The recipient of a number of national and international honours for her poetry, she has worked as a violinist, in health care and as an editor.

Michael Symmons Roberts has won the Forward Best Collection Prize, the Costa Poetry Award and the Whitbread Poetry Award, and been shortlisted for the Griffin International Poetry Prize and the T.S. Eliot Prize. His broadcast work includes the verse film *Men Who Sleep in Cars* (BBC Four, 2017) and *A Fearful Symmetry* (BBC Radio 4), which won a Sandford St Martin Award. He has published two novels and is Professor of Poetry at Manchester Metropolitan University.

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Peace Poetry

November 2018 marks 100 years since the death of Wilfred Owen, one of the foremost poets of his generation, a week before the Armistice. At the end of the 1914-18 commemorations, the Royal Society of Literature marks the anniversary of Owen's death by asking: what if we remembered Owen not as a war poet but as a poet writing for peace? Through this pamphlet of new poetry, a series of public events across England, and schools outreach workshops, we celebrate Owen's legacy, using his poetry as the inspiration for new work.

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