

In celebration of Poetry Day Ireland, *Menu of Poems* is intended for distribution throughout hospitals and healthcare settings in Ireland. The poetry is a selection from the Poems for Patience series in Galway University Hospitals and edited by Ailbhe Darcy.

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# MENU OF POEMS 2019 Selected by AILBHE DARCY



IN CELEBRATION OF POETRY DAY IRELAND  
2 MAY 2019

# MENU OF POEMS 2019

I chose these poems to share with you because of the attention they pay to how small we are, how vulnerable and brief, how limited we are and yet how capable of stretching our limits. We can reach out to one another and “listen with great care”. We can reach out to ourselves and reconcile “ourselves with ourselves”. We can reach out to the world, though the world might slip from us like a jellyfish. I think poetry is a careful kind of reaching out. We live in a noisy world, and it’s difficult, in a world of noise, to say complex or uncertain things to each other – or even to hear ourselves think. Poetry helps a bit. **AILBHE DARCY**, EDITOR

## POEM

MURIEL RUKEYSER

I lived in the first century of world wars.  
Most mornings I would be more or less insane,  
The newspapers would arrive with their careless stories,  
The news would pour out of various devices  
Interrupted by attempts to sell products to the unseen.  
I would call my friends on other devices;  
They would be more or less mad for similar reasons.  
Slowly I would get to pen and paper,  
Make my poems for others unseen and unborn.  
In the day I would be reminded of those men and women,  
Brave, setting up signals across vast distances,  
Considering a nameless way of living, of almost unimagined values.  
As the lights darkened, as the lights of night brightened,  
We would try to imagine them, try to find each other,  
To construct peace, to make love, to reconcile  
Waking with sleeping, ourselves with each other,  
Ourselves with ourselves. We would try by any means  
To reach the limits of ourselves, to reach beyond ourselves,  
To let go the means, to wake.

I lived in the first century of these wars.

From *Selected Poems* ed. Adrienne Rich, (Bloodaxe Books, 2013).



## A JELLY-FISH

MARIANNE MOORE

Visible, invisible,  
A fluctuating charm,  
An amber-colored amethyst  
Inhabits it; your arm  
Approaches, and  
It opens and  
It closes;  
You have meant  
To catch it,  
And it shrivels;  
You abandon  
Your intent –  
It opens, and it  
Closes and you  
Reach for it –  
The blue  
Surrounding it  
Grows cloudy, and  
It floats away  
From you.

From *The Poems of Marianne Moore*,  
edited by Grace Shulman (Faber 2003).

## THE HAIRDRESSER

TARA BERGIN

My hairdresser is young  
and she tells me things  
no one else can:  
about the different kinds of straightening tongs;  
about the war in Afghanistan.

I sit with my hands in my lap,  
in the ridiculous cape that she fastens for me  
at the back. She stands at the nape of my neck  
and I concentrate.

She tells me about her nan’s hair –  
which is coarse (“like yours”) –  
she tells me about colour, and tone;  
she tells me about her boyfriend, the soldier,  
who covered his ears at the party,  
and begged her to take him home.

I watch her in the mirror,  
as she cheerfully takes hold of my hair,  
and pulls it high up into the air;

I sit completely still in the swivel-chair,  
and listen with great care  
to all the things she has to tell me.

From *The Tragic Death of Eleanor Marx*  
(Carcanet Press, 2017).