

Foreword

For the past few years, I've kept a post-it on the computer monitor in the shed. It says in blue biro (fading now to green), in capital letters:

PERCEIVE WHAT IS PRESENT AND WHAT IS POSSIBLE

It's something from a book on ethics that I stumbled upon a few years ago, by an early twentieth century philosopher (Tetsuro Watsuji). The words felt vital to me at the time, as a kind of mantra for myself in my writing. But now, with everything going on, it feels like a totem, it feels almost like a prayer.

It really is a horrible time. It seems that the world is falling headlong into chaos and cruelty—the people tasked with leading some of the world's most powerful nations have this disgusting urge to hurt, dominate and erase others. They seem to be, at their very core, unloving, and this feeling has clearly trickled down into our communities as well. As a result, we seem to me to be on the brink of (or indeed in the process of) ethical collapse, political collapse, economic collapse, civilisational

collapse, environmental collapse... It is very hard to find hope, very hard to nurture it, and as the poet Claudia Rankine said on campus, only yesterday, perhaps 'collapse' is what we have to do, so that we can find a way to get back up... And yet, out of this struggle too, out of this horrible time, come beacons of hope, flares of love, acts of true solidarity.

For me, writing is an act of solidarity, of connection, of empathy, of resistance, of love. This is why the *Quarryman* and all other literary magazines are so important, here in campus and out there in the world. The work in this issue—by writers who perceive both what is present and what is possible—is the very opposite of the work of people who want to tear the world apart. It inhabits different forms and genres, and covers different subjects and landscapes, of course, but always there is presence, and always possibility. The work asks you to inhabit other consciousness, to feel other feelings and to see other places. It moves you in myriad ways, and it lingers with you, and that, for me, is the essence of solidarity, of connection.

And though the work is far-ranging and probes many disparate aspects of the human condition, there is, I think, something that ties it all together, and indeed the late, great Eibhear Walshe wrote about it in his own foreword to *Quarryman I*. The work of the journal, he wrote, enlarges 'our sense of what it is to live and to observe and to be observed.' It is almost a year since we lost Eibhear, far too suddenly. He was a great champion of creative writing at this university and beyond, and an early supporter of *Quarryman*. But amidst the sadness of his passing, and the surrounding chaos, the creative work in this issue and all around this country does give me hope, whether it's a beacon or a flare or a quiet, private moment of connection on a rainy or a balmy afternoon.

All that remains for me to do now is to thank and congratulate the brilliant people who contributed to this issue: the writers, the readers,

the editors, the designers and typesetter, the committee of the English Literature Society, the artists and project managers. You've all connected to put a beautiful, powerful thing out into the world, a thing that fuels hope. My gratitude and admiration to everyone who laid their eyes, hands, minds and hearts on this wonderful thing.

Danny Denton
Midsummer, 2025

Editorial

The works collected in the following volume represent three years of contributions to the *Quarryman* since our last issue was published in spring 2022—during which period many of our attempts to produce a new volume unfortunately came to premature ends. As such, it is quite proudly and gratefully that in this volume, in spite of the wait, we have again been privileged with featuring both new and returning writers from the continuing tradition of creative writing at UCC. It is wonderful to see such a continuity with the run of the journal begun a decade ago in 2015, including strong ties with UCC’s Creative Writing students and graduates. I am especially grateful, though, to everyone who submitted new work for the first time this year, and made the return of the journal possible.

Perhaps this same storied context also contributed to the particular depth and variety we received in the full range of submissions this year, and as a result, to a set of works that seem to really speak to and work with each other even in some subtle and unexpected ways.

As a last note, I would like to particularly thank Danny Denton, along with Seán Kelly of the Arts and Culture Office, the Cork University Press team, and others from UCC’s Library Staff, for all of their advice to us and for their continued support and eagerness to help throughout this year.

Liam McDonagh