

A stone sculpture of a person's face and hand, set within a dark, angular frame against a textured, grey background. The sculpture is carved from a light-colored stone, possibly marble or limestone, and is set within a dark, angular frame that resembles a stylized 'A' or a similar geometric shape. The person's face is shown in profile, looking slightly to the left. The hand is raised to the forehead, with fingers spread, suggesting a gesture of grief, despair, or contemplation. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a wall or a large stone block, with a mottled, greyish-brown color. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

The Power of Words:  
Poems for Holocaust  
Memorial Day 2018

~ Lagan Online ~

THE **POWER** HOLOCAUST  
OF **WORDS** MEMORIAL DAY 2018

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## Contents

4. Amy Louise Wyatt : *Go back to zero*
5. Ruby Price : *Lewis*
6. Glen Wilson : *Shofar*
8. Jordan McAnally : *Survivor*
9. Iain Campbell : *Someone Crossing Bernauer  
Strasse*
11. Hannah Woods : *Verbrennung*
12. Gifford Savage: *Darkness Revealed*
14. Jack Guy : *words to describe a genocide*
15. Gerry McCullough: *On Visiting the Holocaust  
Museum in Jerusalem*
17. Georgia Liddle : *Unspoken Words*
18. Patricia Devlin-Hill : *Migrant Voices*
22. Abigail Willis : *Our Führer was a liar*
23. Patricia Bennett : *The Tech. Kiltyclogher, Co.  
Leitrim (1973)*
25. Matthew Lee : *They'd never forget*
26. Azeem Lateef : *We are the children of immigrants*
33. Letitia Kovacova : *Human*
35. Noelle Robinson : *Sticks and Stones*
37. Anne McMaster : *Alla: the lost boy*
40. Zoe McGrath : *Holocaust*

Amy Louise Wyatt : *Go back to zero*

You emptied your cities like your pockets-  
shook doctors, nurses and teachers out like  
loose change onto the street. Two million once  
polished coins spilt out from the warm linings  
of your city walls. Too much loose change weighs  
you down; adds up-becomes a sum of parts;  
becomes too much to count. Go back to zero.  
They start to call you Brother Number One  
as if parallel kinship matters when  
to stop the weeds you also pull the roots.  
But nothing grows in killing fields. Angka-  
now their brutal parent shoots them down when  
their knees won't bend. This is your Potter's Field.  
Not theirs. They were more than thirty pieces.

## Ruby Price : *Lewis*

Get in the shower Lewis, pleads his mother.  
Daily washing is the routinely forced removal of  
germs and bacteria.

Get in the gas chamber Lewis.  
Ethnic cleansing is the systematic forced removal of  
ethnic and religious groups.

את לא התחנננים אמא את (his mother pleads no more)

*(South Eastern Regional College, Bangor)*

## Glen Wilson : *Shofar*

A common quail draws up a worm  
 that the autumn rain brought to the surface.  
 This field is edged by a forest  
 broken only by a single road.  
 The bird sings wet-my-lips  
 as the worm slips over its white chin  
 and down its curved black throat.

This stretch to the shetl is pockmarked  
 With lies and truths, all kicked through  
 The mud so no one can differentiate  
 Trochenbrod, Trochinbrod, Zofjowka.  
 A place once fought over now razed  
 with only memory to site it.

There was a post office over there  
 when it was connected to the world  
 and debts and love letters hurtled along.  
 There was neither deliverance nor deliveries,  
 all correspondence left hanging;

*write back my love...I'll see you soon...*  
*They have broken through...*

*...don't return home we are in Donetsk*

*...Turn back!*

They are putting up a sign, a memorial plaque  
but what good are signs without people  
to explain them, to roll up sleeves,

“Here dreamer, this is my number  
in a sequence of redacted numerals”.

But numbers and scale are not the only thing  
that should horrify us; it is when we dig deep  
and find one femur with growth left in the marrow.

Listen long and you can hear the echo of the  
Shofar,  
its pitch essayed by the player's embouchure,  
faithful lips practiced in raising remembrance.  
Just then the quail takes wing,  
winter beckons again tomorrow.

*\* Trochenbrod (Zofjowka) was completely eradicated in the course  
of German occupation and the ensuing Holocaust.*

Jordan McAnally : *Survivor*

Life in our camp was painful to bear. Terrified  
screams and endless despair. Imprisoned  
for what?      Being a Jew.  
Tell me:      Does that make me  
less of a person than you?

The lives you cost- unremitting sorrow; boundless  
grief:  
my people massacred; your people deceived.  
SS; Gestapo, Nazi Youth. A ruthless dictator  
will never remove our Jewish nature.

*(South Eastern Regional College, Bangor)*

Iain Campbell : *Someone Crossing  
Bernauer Strasse*

Borrowed light flooded across the empty street,  
diffracting through dusty, broken blinds  
to cast shadowed prison bars  
upon a painted, peeling, shattered plaster wall.

Supper was bratwurst, sliced thin,  
on rye bread, black and dry;  
no onions, just ersatz butter  
scraped thin on one side.

His brother's wireless was still tuned  
to the World Service;  
the clipped tones of 'London calling' fighting static  
and the rumble of DC-7's labouring for Tempelhof.

He thought of Mama and he remembered Papa;  
he wondered about Petra and the little one,  
but he'd left all of that far behind  
on the east bank of the Dnieper, long ago.

There it was someone else's country,  
someone else's hopeless history,  
someone else's pyrrhic victory,  
but here, someone else's searching light.

Sudden, a klaxon sounded; the brightness flickered;  
he heard the short, sharp, sniper's crack.  
And just like at the Dnieper, he saw them fall,  
only this time it was someone else.

Some kid trying to cross the wire,  
just ten feet from freedom,  
someone trying to keep a promise to a friend,  
someone crossing Bernauer Strasse.

## Hannah Woods : *Verbrennung*

We came to the Bibliothek  
to learn and to thrive.  
Soon we were made to choose:  
learn or survive?

Speak your truth, read a book-  
both would face fire.  
Herr Kommandant said '*Arbeit macht frei*'.  
Herr Kommandant is a liar.

Mein Freund Otto, the smartest man alive,  
now wears a uniform of stripes.  
For while the white matches his skin,  
the blue does not match his eyes.

*(South Eastern Regional College, Bangor)*

## Gifford Savage: *Darkness Revealed*

They are there  
 when I close my eyes.  
 Black and white Images imprinted upon my mind.  
 Stark and terrible,  
 without beauty or majesty.  
 It is fitting, somehow, that they are colourless.

Colour denotes Life:  
 Pastel shades of gentle spring days,  
 vibrant bursts of summer splendour,  
 or rich hues of autumn bounty.  
 Even winter is painted  
 with red berries and purple skies.

But to see colour you have to have light,  
 and there was no brightness to allay that seasonless  
 shade.

Only interminable night  
 on a palette unlit by moon or stars to give comfort.  
 There is mourning and great weeping for the  
 children,  
 because they are no more.

The darkness is within us.  
 A horrid, ugly, dreadful thing,  
 birthed by cynicism and hate

and skulking fear.  
Waiting in the shadows  
to rise again and consume.

The curtain is torn.  
The darkness at the heart of man is revealed  
and burned away.  
Day follows night.  
As the earth, once pitch-dark even in the noonday,  
is liberated and bathed once more in the Light.

Jack Guy : *words to describe a genocide*

genocide  
execution  
necrosis  
outrage  
carnage  
immolate  
destroy  
eradicate

*(South Eastern Regional College, Bangor)*

Gerry McCullough: *On Visiting the  
Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem*

Sitting outside, I can't take any more,  
Can't even cry.

I see again the lights, one for each murdered child  
And the pile of children's shoes  
And wonder again  
Why did they not fight back?  
Why did they go gentle into the chambers?  
Why did the guards let themselves be used like  
that?

I long for the release of tears, uselessly.  
These things that happen in our fallen world  
Pierce me too much.  
I need to move.

I stand up, walk, there and back in a small space.  
Waiting for my family to come out.  
I'm still a victim of the memories,  
Unable to move on.

The night is here,  
Lights coming on in the city.  
I watch them growing.  
How small and weak they are against the darkness

Of riots, stabbings, suicide bombers.  
Asleep in our own hatred  
We dream we're changing.



Patricia Devlin-Hill : *Of Migrant Voices*

1.

'What is it you want?'  
asks the voice-in-the-air.

'A safe place to sleep,'  
said the man  
curled in the mud.

What is it you want?'  
asks the voice-in-the-air.

But the man  
had settled into the muffling mud  
had breathed himself  
back into his own skin  
against the insides of his silting clothes,  
taking himself into  
a memory where love waited,  
and his family was whole.

'I am sorry,'  
said the voice-in-the-air.

But the man  
was in absence now curled,

and for the moment, no longer wanting,  
pillowed on the moist meniscus of his tears.

And the voice-in-the-air  
was alone until morning.

2.

'What place is it you want'  
said the honed voice syrup-edged.

'Munich,' said the man,  
with small ones of a height  
to just above his knees.

'What place is it you want,'  
said the honed voice syrup-edged.

While around the man,  
sprung from the trampled sand,  
stained little feet  
slapped their numb pink-saddled toes  
against the cliffs of his legs,  
scrambling fingers anchoring  
to the button holes of his jacket,  
while he burrows his head  
into a pocket retrieving.

'It is not enough,'  
said the honed voice syrup-edged.

And they all stop,  
as if in a game, and the man,  
his children in mid-ascending  
swoop to his shoulders,  
remembers why he began.

And the honed voice syrup-edged,  
pushes them out in the flimsy boat  
and counts the dried, sodden, muddled money.

3.

'What name is it you have?'  
asks the tired voice.

'Siad,' said the man  
in the plastic chair.

'How many is it you are?'  
asks the tired voice.

'We are three now, but we were six before,'  
makes Siad the statement,  
flat-voicing the shift in the words,

that howl iron-lung clamped  
beneath his mud clogged clothes.

'We have a place for you,'  
says the tired voice,  
pen on a house in a street,  
in a grid of a map.  
'This family has spare rooms,  
and they welcome you here.'

And Siad,  
rests a moment  
in the plastic chair,  
and Wolfgang's tired, good, German voice,  
counts three more saved  
in the weekend's forty thousand.

Abigail Willis : *Our Führer was a liar*

We ignored their screams.  
We ignored their cries.  
We ignored them whilst they died.

They didn't know what was coming.  
They didn't know what lay ahead.  
They would never be free again.

We didn't know he was a liar.  
We didn't know his plans.  
We thought it was a labour camp.

Our Führer was a liar.  
Our Führer was a cheat.  
Our Führer could not face defeat.

*(South Eastern Regional College, Bangor)*

Patricia Bennett : *The Tech. Kiltyclogher,  
Co. Leitrim (1973)*

How much is a lie?  
How much is truth?  
memory twists like the bars  
sticking out of the floor  
– the jagged edge of a page torn.

We were there  
– looking up, above  
a mountain of rubble  
to that upstairs room.  
Sunshine walls. A sky roof.

The big ones flew up  
that stairway of stones,  
mothers' warnings ignored  
"tell nawthin'" our rule.  
I didn't go; my feet turned in.

My mother was always  
swapping my shoes,  
try climbing through ruins  
with your shoes twisting out  
and your feet turning in.

We found white chalk  
where the blackboard stood.  
We collected it all and then we drew.  
We had to dig to find a nugget  
of green, yellow or blue.

Forty years on, that bomb explodes  
across my torn page.  
Shards of past like pieces of chalk  
with a slanted nub;  
a teacher, cut off mid stroke.

*This poem previously appeared in The Leitrim Guardian 2018.*

Matthew Lee : *They'd never forget*

The morning was eerie, the soldiers marched on  
not knowing what they would stumble upon.  
After all that they'd seen and all that they'd done,  
they were not prepared for what was to come.

Because what was ahead, stood monstrous and tall;  
cold harsh steel, barbed wire surrounded it all.  
The soldiers crept on, cautious and tame,  
preparing for what was lurking within.

Within the tall fences, hut, chambers they saw  
bodies upon bodies rotting, as snow thawed.  
The men looked in horror, some not looking at all.  
Sickened, tears rising, yet still they moved on.

And as they moved on, deathly stench grew thick.  
The soldiers knew they had to move quick.  
For once they had left, they'd never forget  
the brutality and murder than man can commit.

*(South Eastern Regional College, Bangor)*

Azeem Lateef : *We are the children of  
immigrants*

We are the children of immigrants

Immigrants

Economic migrants

The settlers

The outsiders

The aliens

The foreigners

Never expats

The takers of jobs

The makers of trouble

The disrupters of freedom

As if 2.7 million of our people didn't

die for this land that

they had never walked upon

Or starved to death

for an option for the occupier

was worth more than the life of the occupied

We are the children of immigrants

The immigrants

Most from the commonwealth

The commonwealth  
where none of the wealth is or was common  
And the only thing we had in common  
was the same oppressor  
and the same oppression

Thinking we were equals  
when we came to this land  
they promoted to us as a paradise

We are the children of immigrants

The immigrants  
The products of colonialism  
The reminders of your bloodied history

Yet you repeat it  
when you deny us rights  
when you beat our bodies  
because we dared to come to a land  
we built

We are the children of immigrants

The immigrants

The Drs  
The Lawyers

The Engineers  
The Entrepreneurs  
The Farmers

The Wogs  
Ragheads  
Cockroaches  
Pakis  
Niggers

We are the children of immigrants

The tokens  
The “multicultural” backbone

The faces you only want to see  
when you are boasting on TV  
about how accepting the nation is  
Yet as soon as the off button is pressed  
we too are switched off  
and left to our margins  
that you’ve convinced us are homes

We are the children of immigrants

The diaspora  
The nomads  
For me,

The European amongst Pakistanis  
And the Pakistani amongst Europeans

But we know where we come from  
and so do you  
yet we get asked most "where are you really from"  
Or get told to go back to where we came from

Well, okay

Take me back to 1992  
The Ulster Hospital  
Dundonald

We are the children of immigrants

The ethnic minorities  
The voiceless

Whose mother tongue got relegated to  
Durka durka  
Ching chang chong

So we spoke to our mothers in whispers  
and trained our lungs to be well versed  
in the colonized tongue  
Replaced basic conversation with local slang  
and taught our peers only the swear words

for they were the only thing they wanted to know  
about our language -  
about our culture

We are the children of immigrants

The Musicians

The Poets

The Artists

But still outsiders

Still foreigners

Still Wogs

Still Ragheads

Still Cockroaches

Still Pakis

Still Niggers

We are the children of immigrants

We are the children of immigrants

We are the children of war zones and forgotten  
comfort zones

Because to leave a place  
Where you know the language  
And understand and love the culture  
is not to sit on benefits  
but because the cards life has dealt you  
have lead you to risk your dignity  
your pride  
your livelihood  
your life for your children

We are the children of immigrants

No

We are the children of dreams

We are the children of courage

We are the children of beauty

And we have nothing to be ashamed about no  
matter how much you try and make us jus-tify our  
humanity

We are the children of humanity

And we are not political pawns

And we are not cockroaches

And we are not Pakis

And we are not Niggers

We are the children of struggle

We are the children of hope

And for that we have nothing to be embarrassed  
about

You Do.

Letitia Kovacova : *Human*

It may be hard to believe, to see,  
to feel, to breath the air, that the  
stolen lives in masses took in,  
as they said goodbye much too soon.

And while we can read a book,  
or take a trip to a museum,  
it will never be much the same.  
Death, in any case, the living

cannot imagine. We say we will  
remember, but our memory is  
seemingly lost. Ignorant we are,  
to our own time's tragic loss.

The deaths of innocents, in masses  
and masses. Not just a long time  
ago, in a history book, too surreal  
to be true. But in our own time

and day- who is to blame?  
Lest we forget. Yet, why does  
genocide still happen? It starts  
with one evil: our own dislikes.

Homophobia, racism, elitism, religion.  
And while we think we are good  
people; tragic, but indeed true,  
we are perpetrators too.

No child is born discriminating.  
So, teach them what is true  
That no matter what country, religion  
or colour: they are human too.

*(South Eastern Regional College, Bangor)*

Noelle Robinson : *Sticks and Stones*

Sticks and stones will break my bones, but names  
will never harm me.

Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words  
will never harm me.

Names and words, empty until filled with passion,  
poison.

Names and words, power unimaginable: power to  
wound, break, destroy, alienate.  
Power to motivate, manoeuvre, embolden,  
obliterate.

Sticks and stones, devoid of force, lie impotent, of  
course.

Hatred, fear, ignorance - all three make mighty fuel:  
words, the tinder igniting many mighty fires.

Every contact leaves a trace, EVERY contact leaves  
a trace...

Careless talk costs lives, careless whispers, venom  
thrives.

Words full of hate become poisonous barbs, hatred  
creating a terrible tide.

A terrible tide which lashes and maims, a terrible  
tide of words and names.

Keep your powder dry, keep your arsenal secure.  
Weapons check, for inspection, port arms!

Use words wisely, you know not what they do,  
Choose words wisely, for the force is in YOU.

Choose life, choose love.

Anne McMaster : *Alla: the lost boy*

It's easy to find my house.

We're on the main route to Dzlady - a long, tree-covered road with moss-covered walls and orchards.

It is quiet and peaceful there;  
fields and orchards tumble over one another and  
the ancient trees around the estate seem to  
whisper in the warm summer's breeze.

I have memories of climbing one of the large stone  
walls outside the main orchard where apple  
trees once grew.

The stones were large and heavy - beautifully  
placed in a rough mosaic - but there were  
footholds and handholds enough for me to  
pull my way easily up to the top of the wall.

Did I ever believe for one moment that I would fall?  
I braced myself at the very top, hooking my fingers  
into the rough stonework - leaning in,  
edging closer and closer to the fragrant fruit  
- until my fingers arched around one of the  
ripe apples.

I pulled it towards me.

For a moment - just a moment - the apple swung  
on the branch towards me.

It dipped towards me, but did not break free.  
I could have fallen then, but I did not.

With one twist, I snapped the stalk and the branch  
swung away – leaving the apple, cool and  
fragrant in my sweating hand.

I sat there atop that rough stone wall on a late  
summer afternoon and ate the apple then  
and there – the juices running fresh and  
sharp into my mouth and trickling down my  
chin.

I've never tasted better.

We'd take all our fresh fruit from the orchards then  
– and our vegetables from the large walled  
garden behind the house. It took three  
gardeners to work my father's land.

The house itself was large – five bedrooms, three  
bathrooms, kitchen, drawing room, din-ing  
room, music room and a large living room.

From my bedroom I could watch our horses  
galloping across the paddocks at the back of  
the house.

My father kept hounds for hunting and there were  
always farm cats slinking round shad-owed  
corners of the houses where the grain was  
stored.

I had a cat of my own – a sleek dark cat with soft  
paws and deep green eyes. I called him  
Ariel. I named him for the lion of God.

I found space on that old estate - and a wonderful  
sense of peace.

There was time and space to think.

The ghetto stripped me of all that.

After I'd been in there for a while, I found a tiny  
    place under the memorial to lost souls where  
    I could let my emotions run free.  
Where I could break down without shame.  
Sometimes, I met other people doing the same  
    thing.  
We never talked of it.  
Others began leaving messages of how they felt at  
    the time.  
Only a few people knew of it.  
My treks there remained private to the end.  
I never told my family I was there.

Zoe McGrath: *Holocaust*

Hordes of death.  
Ordinary lives afflicted.  
Land absorbing emotion.  
Over rifts and fallouts.  
Carnage covers races battling.  
Anticipation in the air.  
Under the earth they lay now.  
Seeping their bones to dust once more.  
Teaching our world we need a new path.