

RANCID IDOLS PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

# PEACE



24 HOUR CHAPBOOK  
CHALLENGE V

*Libby*

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Cover Image: extract from 'The Russian Bear in search of peace  
(during the provisional government after the April revolution)'  
by Wilhelm Schulz (1917)

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## Foreword

We release this latest chapbook on the weekend marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement here in Northern Ireland. Therefore, the theme of ‘peace’ seems appropriate.

Although peace can apply to many things on different levels – personal, interpersonal, local, nation, etc – the reasoning for choosing our picture in question is inspired by the outgoing invasion of Ukraine by Russia. The Russian Bear is a long-standing trope, used in political cartoons to suggest a brutal and hungry regime. The idea of the bear swimming through blood in order to attain peace feels like an appropriate, if crude, metaphor for our own experience of ‘The Troubles’.

There is of course nothing about the current Russian regime however than suggests any appetite for peace, only power. ‘Peace’ can be an uneasy word, loaded with precursors and requirements. Our poems here reflect on how fragile and elusive peace can be, and yet show us that it is the most desired of human conditions. May we continue to hope for peace whenever it is required.

Colin Dardis, Editor.

Yvonne Boyle: *Good Friday Agreement: 25th  
Anniversary*

The absence (almost) of violence.  
White dove wings flutter upwards.  
Wind catches the olive branch of trust.

The bear of bitter legacy,  
cultural muscle memory of resentment,  
follows.

Red sea.  
Brown sky.

We are  
the strength of the bear,  
the fragile hope of the dove.  
We are  
the olive branch promise.

Lisa O'Hare: *The Missing Peace*

An alien concept  
We come in \_\_\_\_\_  
It will not be permanent or perfect  
Just a brief release  
When we make our \_\_\_\_\_  
We seek \_\_\_\_\_ of mind  
\_\_\_\_\_ pacts signed  
As it's fragile  
\_\_\_\_\_ never comes free  
No lifetime guarantee  
Protect it at all costs  
Without that, \_\_\_\_\_ gets lost

Robert Watt: *The Palace of Peace*

A moment before the coming of sleep,  
Washed and brushed and cosy among the sheets  
Still scented with their airing in the sun.  
Flat and floating free into the bed, sprung  
Against the wearing and worrying. Feel  
The loosening, as mind begins its fall  
Through the internal visions of the day.  
Sinking past their memories and away  
From the waking burdens - becoming small.  
I draw a plimsol line beneath them all,  
Then, like a punctured bag, my breath released,  
I slip free into that palace of peace.

## Kenneth Owens: *An Illusion*

How could anyone sleep  
in a river? The closed mouth  
still has many teeth.



Anna Murphy: *The Olive Branch*

A white dove soars and sweeps  
Above the river that flows  
With the blood of young men —  
Fathers, sons with shattered dreams  
In a manmade hell —  
While fearful women fled  
With children bound  
To their mothers' weary bones.

In the centre of the river  
The white dove drops an olive branch,  
Ripples rising in ever widening circles  
Until there's a stillness, a peace —  
And river flows with pure clear water.

Marina Esler: (*At*) *Peace*

And in my dreams  
I find you there  
Without a care  
You dare and do  
Is this the true you  
Who can and will  
Push forward still  
Against the grain  
That old refrain  
Of must and should  
And maybe could  
Won't bind you

Colin Dardis: *An Investigation into the Human  
Nature of the Bear*

Is that olives, or nettles, in your mouth?  
Understand that my eyes are aged  
by years of swimming upstream,  
a constant slap of resistance  
will make anyone blind eventually.

I am free: you should have seen my paws  
before they got porcine and viscid  
from all the blood; they call me Lady MacBearth.  
I can't help it; I need the protein of many deaths  
no matter how rife with fruit your branches are.

And the rivers can't wash me  
when the mountains are piled with the dead,  
the butchers still sharpening their knives  
against the rocks of this riverbank.

## Caoimhe McConkey: *Trauma Takes Over*

Trauma  
snatches peace from the soul  
chaotic claws crushing every ounce  
plunging it into the dreary abyss  
unreachable  
where only shadows exist

## Geraldine O'Kane: *Where Peace Finds Us*

Presently I walk the peace line  
of my mind slow and assuredly  
one foot at a time. We take privilege  
of morning silence as we prepare  
ourselves for the day ahead, shadow  
each other's steps, room to room.  
We marvel at birds architecting homes  
for their young. Through it all we breathe.

Catherine Ann Cullen: *Future Perfect*

No conscription letters will have landed  
and the young men will be at home  
in their own countries.

The therapists will have exhausted collective trauma,  
moved on to divorce and phobias.

Pedestrians will have tut-tutted at the van  
parked askew outside the station  
and ignored the sound  
of a car backfiring in the next street.

No one will have spoken in code  
testing for shibboleths,  
and the children  
playing football on the beach  
will have dribbled their ball home.

John Caulfield: *Unfinished*

I am weary of this burden  
I have carried for so long  
and found no place to rest  
that was not fought upon.  
So many call me by name  
yet listen to the anguished cry  
when reaching out a hand,  
the proud called to fight and die.  
If peace be born again of hate  
how much longer must I wait?

Stephen Knox: *Peace Baby*

Good Friday Nineteen Ninety-Eight  
that date  
celebrated labour  
you came among us  
to take death's place  
coaxed, pushed, urged  
scared you might be stillborn  
scorned, neglected  
prodded by a forty-foot barge pole  
infant of mixed marriage  
fragile, vulnerable  
you craved care  
now twenty-five  
thank God you're still alive.



Clark Chambers: *untitled*

Six am, an awakening, rudely interrupted from a blissful sleep  
of...wait, do I mean peace and love or sleep and lonely  
longitudinal love from across the Lough radiating water  
and haze?

I'll choose peace, togetherness and warmth.

A flashing light brings me peace, I can see it but not hear it.  
Darkness punctuated by sweeping, regular beats of  
light: but up close, they're more numerous than meets  
the eye.

Peace, peace, peace/peace

Peace, peace, peace/peace...

Wendy Young: *Oh Solace, Solace*

So hard to find solace  
To be with my thoughts  
Ankle biting incessants  
Forever gnarl my doubts  
Sun worshippers smile  
While I wish to hide  
Away from urban life  
O to be on a beach  
Far from revellers sight  
To write, to write, to write  
Blighted my block  
Expands from excuses  
I may as well say  
I cram or am useless

## Mark Russell: *Peace Is*

Peace is the absence of disturbance.  
Time or place without chaos or stress,  
in nature or somewhere more urban.  
When difficulties struggle to stack.

Peace is finding ourselves at our best,  
when no demons are clawing our backs.  
Peace is when everything is at rest,  
and there is space enough to grow in.

Peace is when no one's on the attack.  
Instead, there's compassionate loving.  
Peace is bliss; Yang white against Yin black.  
When there are no longer any tests.

Peace is welcome death of suffering.

Connection. One with all. Zen flowering.



*(Image by Mark Russell)*

## Ann-Marie Foster: *Critter*

Have yer aul' peace then.  
Here, take it, see what good  
it does ye. Women.  
Yis are never happy. Ye could  
have let it be, like the litter's runt  
to founder and fade but yis gurned til  
they did it. And bore the brunt.  
Aye! Ha! And took the schill.  
Ah stop yer whingin'. No-one's  
bothered any more. We've all  
grown up, we know what can be done  
with this wee thing. We've stalled  
long enough. There, there, Peace.  
There, there.

## Lizz Murphy: *13 Days of Looking at a Fig Tree*

*with thanks to Wallace Stevens*

Tiny Finch-beaks etch ripening fig-skin how small their heart  
beats Lorikeets' tangerine bills incise A hard-at-it Leatherhead  
shakes a whole branch like a thug One leaf like a hand reaching  
for the sky one leaf reaching like a scream fruit blushing ripe from  
the base up Fig-remnant still white inside — a half-chewed moon  
Blue orange and green acrobats — the Lorikeets painting an  
afternoon A Silver Eye's flanks flush pink with the swelling figs  
They return — suspended upside down they catch light Too fast  
the Wattle-bird is a grey blur before stilling striated feathers  
against silvered branches The Blue-faced Honeyeater's lucid calls  
from among the thousand changing leaves Each leaf each bird  
another day closer to peace of mind

## Sandee Bree Breathnach: *Simple Peace*

To the ginger-black cat that sleeps on my shed  
With the breeze combing your fur  
And the sun massaging your back;  
To the peacock butterfly that rests on the garden wall  
With a belly full of sap  
And a platter of watercolour flowers before you;  
To the spider who lives at the bottom of the stairs  
Spinning works of art on a loom  
And waiting patiently for the world to pass by:  
Please tell me your secret.

Louise Machen: *The Search*

Let's keep moving into the wilderness;  
I will bear the scratches of thorns  
and uncertainty if I have a grip of you.  
I will slice my flesh; welcome open wounds  
if, open-palmed, we can tear through  
the brambles, the silence,  
this wordless conversation –  
people don't always say I love you  
and I'm tired of looking for things that aren't lost.