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Creative Chaos

Creative Writing Class 2024-2025

Chief Editor:	Maria Wren
Copy Editor:	Ethan Butler
Cover Design:	Isabella Harley and Kathleen Duffy Ryan
Page Design:	Cír Doyle
Audio Files:	Ethan Butler

Stock images sourced at Adobe Stock
 Bio Avatars created using Picrew

Illustration Credits:

Isabella Harley	The Serpent on pg. 20 The Gun on pg. 27 The Seal on pg. 37 The Shark on pg. 39
Kathleen Duffy Ryan	The Arcade Machine on pg. 18
Maria Wren	The Dancer on pg. 31 The Woman on pg. 34
Ethan Butler	The Grim Reaper on pg. 36

Guest Illustrator:

HL Doyle	The Alien on pg. 23
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The Creative Writing Course at Coláiste Dhúlaigh College of Further Education

This course is designed for anyone with an interest in creative writing and storytelling. Students explore various aspects of writing such as fiction, short stories, poetry and scripts. Students are encouraged to develop both written and visual content.

Classes are delivered in a relaxed environment and students are given the opportunity to build on existing and/or new story ideas, as well as learn new skills such as analysing media and using illustration software.

The one-year QQI level 5 course encourages students to share and critique ideas in a supportive setting. The modules offered on the course are Creative Writing, Writing Skills for journalism, Script Writing, Intercultural Studies, Image Processing, Media Analysis, Communications & Personal Professional Development.

Post Leaving Certificate and mature students are welcome to apply for this course. For more information about entry requirements and course fees visit www.dhulaigh.ie



Foreword

Welcome to the second edition of “The Quill”. This year, as other years, the creative writing students were a truly unique group. The class of 2025 undoubtedly found their tribe in Dhúlaigh. As their tutor, it was a privilege to see the strong bonds of friendship form on day one, and know that those bonds will endure, like so many other relationships that were formed in this college over the years.

During the year, we had a writing workshop delivered by two alumni from the class of 1994. It was a reminder of how creativity continues to ripple through generations, and will hopefully continue in a world of AI. I have no doubt that this years’ graduates will one day return to inspire the creative writing students of the future.

The creative writing class of 2025 taught me a lot about the changing nature of education, and shone a light on accessibility and neurodiversity in particular. Small, but significant, things like using subtitles and the correct pronouns, to other things like navigating aphantasia, and physical spaces that we often tend not to consider as “normal people”. It has challenged many assumptions I subconsciously make, and will leave a lasting impact on how I approach teaching.

Like every academic year, it has been a busy time. These students were purposefully busy, bringing their energy and passions into projects both inside and outside the classroom – from Cír’s poetry challenge, to Ethan’s YouTube endeavors, Kathleen’s fantasy novel writing, Debbie’s hard-hitting poetry and Isabella’s illustration talents. Liam’s love of sport came to the fore, while Ross’ knowledge of Seamus Heaney pleasantly surprised us all.

It was my absolute pleasure to see the personal growth and confidence in our editor Maria – this is the reward in being a teacher, not the finished grades, but the finished person that Dhúlaigh helps to create in some small way.

I hope that you will enjoy the stories and creative writing contained in these pages. The students have worked hard on this, and it is very much a project of their own making. The Quill is indeed a culmination and expression of the class of 2025's quirky creative chaos.

Laura Roche, Class Coordinator



The Creative writing class with author Michelle Jackson

Notes from Our Editor, Maria Wren

Being the editor of The Quill - Creative Chaos has been a lovely experience for me, but it wouldn't be possible without the talent and the endless help from the class and our teachers. As the name suggests, our magazine is beautifully chaotic.

Thanks goes to designer Izzy's fun fantasy writing, the gothic romantic flair of Debbie's poetry, Kathleen who took us back to the lost haunted game genre with her short story and Cír inspiring us all with their righteous, heartfelt style of writing.

Meanwhile, Liam's tense crime script, Ross' sharing of his passion for local fiction and Ethan's melting of our hearts with his beautiful, romantic short story, all culminated in this printed work.

Thanks to these talented writers, Creative Chaos is bound to have something for everyone. The magazine wouldn't have happened without all these wonderful contributions, but a lot more work had to go on behind the scenes to create the chaos that is our class magazine.



Thanks goes to Ethan for not only being my copy editor, but also providing his voice to our recordings of each piece. Check out the SoundCloud QR code found on the accessibility page to hear these. Both Isabella and Kathleen provided us with many of the illustrations you will see throughout the magazine, as well as working on the cover page graphics.

Thank you to Cír for their work on formatting and designing the final piece. A special thanks to tutors Laura Roche and Will McDermott for providing us with the guidance and support that made all this possible.

The second volume of The Quill is merely a snapshot of the talent and learning our class showed throughout the academic year. This year has been immensely educational and that wouldn't have been the case without the teachings of the incredible tutors: Dave, Denise, Laura, Michael and Will. I look forward to seeing what we all do in the future but in the meantime, enjoy The Quill volume 2: Creative Chaos.



Images of Bake Sale in Aid of Laura Lynn Hospice, organised by Maria Wren

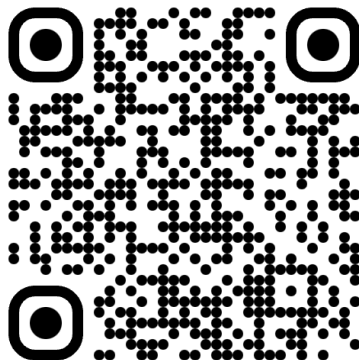
Accessibility Notes

We have gone to great lengths to make this magazine as accessible as possible. While we believe that universal access is the goal, we appreciate that this edition of The Quill is not 100% accessible, but we hope that it helps set a standard that future students can improve on.

To help with accessibility, Ethan has lent his voice to recording of all the pieces. These voice recordings will be available on the college's SoundCloud page. Here you can choose to listen to an individual piece or all of our contributions together. The QR code for SoundCloud can be found below. <https://soundcloud.com/CDCFE>

We know that true accessibility cannot be achieved without considering our mad and neurodivergent community, as such on the next page we have included a list of common triggers that you may find in each piece. However, we also acknowledge that triggers can be extremely personal so please read with caution, and know it is always okay to step away from a piece if you are uncomfortable.

Read with care and enjoy our Creative Chaos.



Content Notices

Page	Piece	Potential Triggers
11	The Loyal and Heavy Heart By Ethan Butler	Claustrophobia Anxiety Abandonment
15	Tragi-cade By Kathleen Duffy Ryan	Childhood illness Implied death of a child
19	Ragnarök's Fury By Isabella Harley	Catastrophe
21	Poetry by Debbie Conroy	Implied violence against women Alcoholism
23	Microfiction and Perfection by Cír Doyle	Transphobia Violence Body dysmorphia
25	Sense by Liam Reilly	Violence Guns Crime
31	Dancing Through Life by Maria Wren	Body dysmorphia Performance pressure
35	Dancing With the Grim Reaper by Debbie Conroy	Death
41	Poem and Article by Cír Doyle	Ableism

A little bit about us



Cíir Doyle

They/ Them

<https://tinyurl.com/CirDoyle>

Reading is how I learned about the world. Writing is how I create a world I am proud of. While I will read anything, I am most regularly found with a fantasy book. My writing takes inspiration from my activism work as a queer disabled feminist. This course helped me realise the strength in my non-fiction writing for lobbying and educating.



Debbie Conroy

She/ They

<https://tinyurl.com/DebbieConroy>

I joined this course to perfect my poetry skills as I've always loved poetry due to it reminding me of music and singing. It's such a beautiful art form. Writing has always been a way for me to vent or talk about issues in a creative way.



Ethan Butler

He/ Him

<https://tinyurl.com/EthanButler>

I love discussing and analysing media, which inspired me to start up a YouTube channel as a video essayist. The Creative Writing course has been a great tool in helping me approach that career goal.



Isabella Harley

She/ Her

<https://tinyurl.com/IsabellaHarley>

The world of storytelling has always captivated my heart. I enjoy watching a story unfold on screen. My favourite genre is action/ adventure movies. I also love to write poems based on my emotions.



Kathleen Duffy Ryan

She/ Her

I've loved stories since I was little. Internet horror has always been my favourite, such as Creepypastas, the SCP Foundation, and Analog Horror. The story I wrote was heavily inspired by Petscop on YouTube.



Maria Wren

She/ Her

<https://tinyurl.com/MariaWren>

Studying Creative Writing has to be one of the best decisions I've ever made. I love the beauty of putting my thoughts and ideas on paper for everyone to see.

More importantly, it's brought me closer to other beautiful writers and friends who I hope to know forever. I love the encouragement they gave me, not just writing but also pursuing my love of baking.



Liam Reilly

He/ Him

My writing is often a reflection of my love of sport, especially boxing and MMA. Though my love of crime movies, such as The Godfather, influence my work a great deal as well.



Ross Murphy

He/Him

I am a huge Star Wars fan and classical Disney animation enthusiast. I like to write Star Wars fan fiction. I am currently taking the time to work on an original story. I enjoy making stop-motion videos.



Writing Collection

Page	Piece	Writer
11	Story : The Loyal and Heavy Heart	Ethan Butler
15	Story : Tragi-cade	Kathleen Duffy Ryan
19	Ballad : Ragnarök's Fury	Isabella Harley
21	Poetry : The Walk Home	Debbie Conroy
22	Poetry : Just One More	Debbie Conroy
23	Microfiction	Cír Doyle
24	Poetry : Perfection	Cír Doyle
25	Script : Sense	Liam Reilly
29	Poetry : Blood & Rose	Isabella Harley
30	Poetry : Haiku: Cupid's Whisper	Isabella Harley
31	Story : Dancing Through Life	Maria Wren
35	Poetry : Dancing With the Grim Reaper	Debbie Conroy
37	Story : Tales of the Underwater Kingdom: Ronan's First Adventure	Ross Murphy
41	Poetry : 4 Flights of Stairs	Cír Doyle
42	Article : An Article Extract: (In) Accessibility in FET	Cír Doyle

The Loyal and Heavy Heart

By Ethan Butler

The loyal and heavy heart will cast out any semblance of self-preservation. Throw itself into the bottomless pit of Death's gob. And bury itself beneath the weight of a million lifetimes of burden. If it meant but a taste of love on its beating and bloody lips.

My mind protested this voyage. I could faintly hear it, muffled under all the rubble of my head's space. But it was too late. My heart had a direct line to my mouth and body. And it was the ever loyal, ever heavy heart that spoke the loudest. Like a wailing patient, screaming for his next dose of numbing witchcraft.

I followed you into that place. I followed you into my tomb. That it might bring you happiness, bring you fulfillment. Where are you now? When I need you most? Is this the happiness you so sought to take? And I sought to give? Was it truly worth it in the end?

You were there. My guiding light through this winding, naturally formed passage tomb. We entered together, your influence, your hold over- -every fibre of matter that did make me, had turned my blood to wine, intoxicating me. Your hand clasped to mine so tightly my heart's wine could no longer reach it.

You looked to me, with a look that melted me down to be moulded. The windows of your soul wide open, inviting me in. The curl and crease of your lips, dimpling the skin on your cheek. A look crafted for me, and me alone. Incomprehensible for my mind to decipher, and so my heart did the translating. It was love. It was all I ever needed of you, nothing more.

But you had an appetite. An appetite you could only satiate by exploring far beyond the limits of my comfort. With me in tail by your side. A furiously loyal mutt. Hypnotized by your visage, sworn to your every whim.

It was never up to me. Choice had long left my vocabulary. I'd traded freedom for safety so many years ago. That even now, trapped in this place, this pore of the earth, shrinking my existence to a cold and solid nothing, is hardly distinguishable from my existence in the outside world.

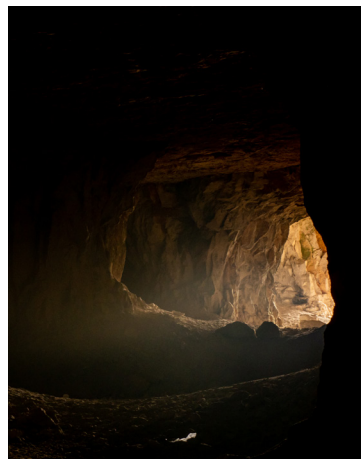
I should have known when we'd first reached it. The point of no return. The stench of a bad omen coated my lungs, suffocating me.

"Come on! I want to see what's on the other side of it. But I'm only going through if you will as well." You said, gifting me with purpose. My mouth moved, and the words escaped before they'd been properly vetted.

"Alright, let's do it."

She smiled, pleased by my compliance, and planted her lips against mine. Just the remedy needed to keep me firmly under her spell.

Horizontally you lay, snaking your way through the narrow gap. I followed close behind. My tether didn't stretch far. My body scratched and scraped against the jagged and cruel rock. I could hear my mind again, screaming and bellowing out to turn back. But there was no stopping me now. It was too late. I'd have allowed the rock to tear the flesh from my bones and consume it before I would abandon her.



And so, I crawled, and I crawled, and I crawled..
Suddenly, as though the dead reached out from the stone to seize me, I was snagged. Stuck in the unforgiving grip of the earth. My arms lay outstretched in front of me. The space was too tight to slide them down by my sides. I wiggled and squirmed to get loose. But like quicksand, my protests only drew me further into hopelessness.

I opened my mouth to call for help, but shame withheld my words. Panic slid its way under my skin. It rattled my chest like an empty spray can. I could hear my bones crackle against the stone as I began to thrust my body erratically in desperation. My headlight started to flicker and dim. Fading into darkness.

As I threw my gaze about the crevice, my mind now took the wheel once more, trying in vain to find a solution. Too little too late. Distracted by my own inefficiency, I'd failed to notice the most terrible truth.

You were gone.

Only then did fear release my voice from its grip.

"Kate?!.." I cried out pathetically.

"Where are you?! I-I'm stuck! I can't move, and I think I'm bleeding.. Please come back.. I need you!.. Kate!.. Kate!!!"

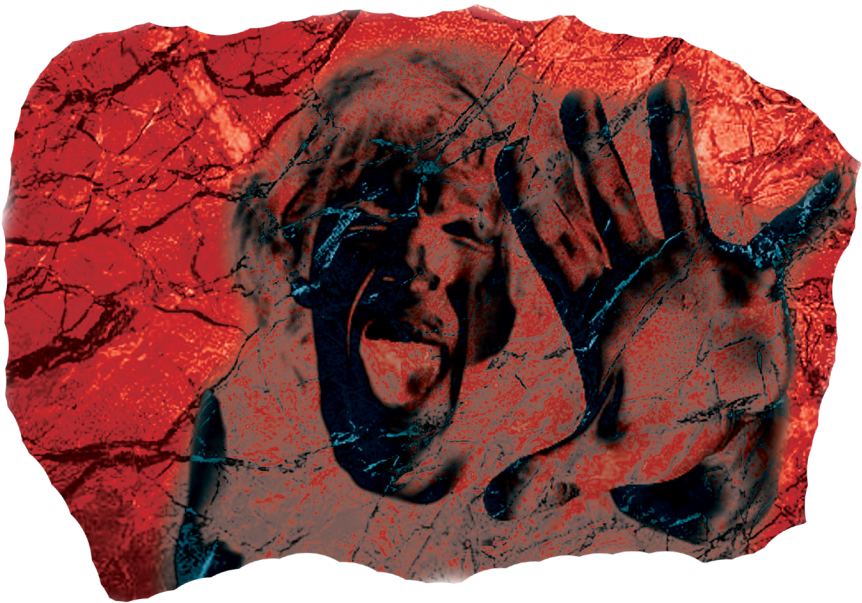
My pleas met only with a devastating silence that pierced my ear drums like a freshly sharpened spear.

The earth tightened its hold of me. Making me its lover, its fresh victim. Ready to devour, embracing me with fatal affection. Tenderly twisting my body into its image. Robbing me of all physical agency.

Perhaps I deserved this fate. Perhaps this was my purpose. To be a stepping stone in the life of another. To be eaten alive by nature. It was folly to give all that was me to you.

This end was inevitable. When one only gives, they are destiny-bound to expire eventually. I had only wished to truly taste a selfish happiness of my own before my well had run dry. But this too was folly. Her appetite was simply too great for me to satiate.

My loyal and heavy heart had fled, all that remained was me, my mind, and my grave. The spell was broken, for the first time in memory's horizon I had tasted freedom. Here, trapped deep in the earth. Alone. Broken.



Tragi-cade

By Kathleen Duffy Ryan

The taxi came rolling up the old street, splashing puddles in its wake. I got in the car and closed my umbrella, squelching as I sat down. “Mr. Steven’s Arcade please”. If I’m going to be staying here for a bit, I may as well visit that place again.

I remember going to this arcade with Danny all the time. The moment the school bell rang, it was a race to get to the good games before the lines got too long. Now, it’s the only arcade left in business. I remember when there were 20 arcades within walking distance of the school. Now, I feel like there’s next to nothing open. Whatever life there was either died or moved on like I did.

The window of the taxi was clouded and soaked. I hate rain. Danny liked it though, I don’t know why. I recognize the colours and vague shapes of the restaurants, and the pizza place I loved to drag Danny to, Crust Lust Pizza. We ordered a pizza and large drink. He got the strawberry soda; I got the meat lovers pizza. I prefer orange soda, but I still got it for him. We were buddies, after all. I can count how many of them aren’t boarded up on one hand. I don’t know if the place is even open. I guess the rats finally shut it down.

I get out of the taxi at Newber Street, giving the money to the cabby. She scoffed before driving off. Maybe because I didn’t tip. Maybe she thought I was immature for going to an arcade. Or maybe she was just having a bad day. I don’t blame her.

“Mr. Steven’s Arcade! Relive that 80s glory!” I’m next to sure that’s what it says. A few letters are faded or missing. Plus, that red and yellow was an eyesore. It wasn’t even that faded; the sign just assaulted my eyes. Mr. Steven knows how old the place is. I bet if he sold even one of those old arcade machines, he could finally retire.

Then again, this was Danny's favourite. If even one speck of dust was different, or even a single mouse was dead. I think he might flip a car. The door creaks, same as always, that crack in the glass from Will throwing his shoe at it was still there. The nacho smell is as strong and nauseating as ever. Not a machine out of place either. Like I travelled back in time to when Danny and I still came here.

~~~~~

"Come on, Rachel! We can play Whack-A-Mole! I'll beat you this time for sure!" He'd say, like clockwork each time we went through those doors. Rachel... it feels weird hearing that name now. It's always been "honey" or "bestie", rarely my actual name. I sound off the machines as I walk past them to Prize-Town. Not a speck of dust, even the Street Fighter joystick was still jammed from Henry sticking gum in it. Yet not a soul playing the games. No one in there aside from the guy at the counter for the prizes.

He was different though. The old man from Danny and I's days is gone. Dead, probably, it was rare we saw him without a cigarette. This guy was young. Most likely only a bit older than me. He looked too unenthusiastic for an arcade. He'd look less out of place in the corner shop down the road. It's like he was counting his seconds until the sweet release of death. Or the end of his shift.

~~~~~

I look at the prizes, some newer, like new sticky hands and mugs. Some yellowed from age.



Like those bouncy balls no one liked because they barely bounced, or those colouring books that had fabric rather than paper. I remember that foam swords used to be done here. Will and Gregory had a duel, and everyone got real into it.

It was all fun and games until Brian threw his money at them and hit Will in the eye. Gregory won the duel after that, and Brian was banned from the arcade. It was funny back then somehow. Maybe because we were just kids.

I walk around the arcade a bit more, seeing all the same games and mouse holes. Then that game Simon loved caught my eye. I remember Simon was addicted to that game. Danny told me that it looked like Asteroids with more colours. It didn't seem like something either of us would like. I just tried to get the max score on Donkey Kong or Pac-Man. While Danny just played Asteroids or Frogger.

~~~~~

I remember one time we came here. Simon was home sick, so this game was free. Danny gave it a go after Jimmy beat his high score at Frogger. I left him to it, playing the, at the time, new Punch-Out machine for most of the day. I was in the bathroom when it was home-time, and our parents came in to collect us. I remember seeing Danny not want to leave in the middle of a game. I dismissed it, as often he was dead focused on playing and refused to leave until he beat it.

The next day, Danny had his head down for most of school. He said it was hard to sleep, and he was feeling sick. Mrs. Roseberry told him to relax and drink some water, but I don't think it helped as much as we thought it did. Or... as much as we hoped it would. He didn't even go outside to recess. Instead, he stayed in the supply closet under Mrs. Roseberry's supervision so he could try and get some sleep. We had a substitute for the rest of the day because of that. When everyone went to the arcade, Danny made it to the game before Simon. He was crying, so Craig and I taught him how to play Pac-Man. Simon was still feeling a bit sick but seemed to at least be in a better mood from learning to play a new game. I didn't know I was introducing my future spouse to one of my favourite games. Danny, though... I don't know what he was doing. But I'm not sure he was having fun like Simon; Craig and I were.



The days kept going like that. Danny would feel sick and tired most of the day, sometimes running to the bathroom and coming back with gunk around his mouth. He'd spend most of the day with a sub looking after him so he could sleep safely and immediately run to that arcade game when the bell went. While Simon and I would just play random games together. I saw him recover before. His skin would get its colour back, he coughed less and actually slept properly. But this time, it was like he recovered in the opposite way.

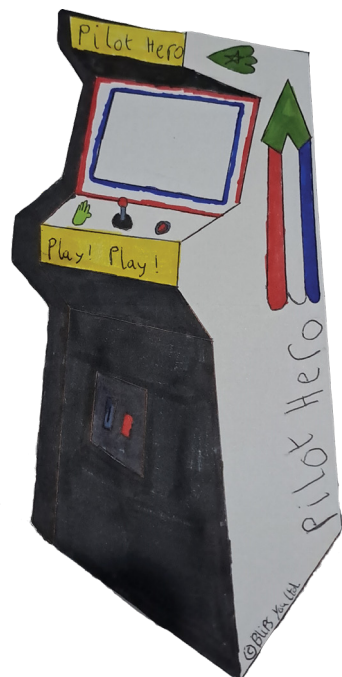
He got more addicted to that damn game. Saying it's the only time he didn't feel so awful; that it was his only comfort. We talked less and less. It was all about that game to him. Even Will grew sick of hearing about nothing but that game and stopped talking to him too.

~~~~~

I turn away from that game machine. If I had my cricket bat, I'd smash the damn thing. All I can do is hope no-one touches it again. I just pop my only quarter into Pac-Man and play it again. I even see the scoreboards. RAC, SIM, WRK, POO and... DAN...

I put a few quid on the counter and left. As much as I miss this place, I don't want to come here for the next few days. I'm here for my family, not nostalgia. I got a strawberry soda from some corner store that was opened last week. I savoured the taste like it was the last drink on earth.

I miss him.



Ragnarök's Fury

By Isabella Harley

Clouds go jet black.
A rumble of roars echoes through the atmosphere.
Will we all survive?

The whimsical ash tree stretches.
Its branches reach into the depths of the heavens above.
Thunder wreaks havoc as we observe.
Will our hero arrive?

The wind howls, carrying whispers of dread.
A flash of thunder tears a small hole in our atmosphere.
A sense of determination and power fills the air.

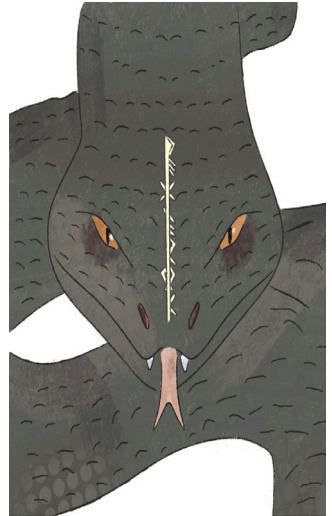
From the breach, his long ginger hair flows wild and untamed.
His armour glistens, catching in the fractured light.

“Our hero! Rescue us from this nightmare!
Our realms will crumble if you fail!”

The god surveys the crowd of mortals.
Their frantic voices are rising like a tide.
The man stands in awe.
“I come on behalf of my people,” he proclaims.
“To protect the innocent.”
Thunder roars as Mjolnir spins in Thor’s mighty grasp.
Will triumph follow in his path?
The storm swells, a fury unchained.
Thunder rumbles through the sky.
Then clouds part, as the serpent rises.
A symbol of fate—destruction and rebirth.
Twisting time itself, endless.
An ancient force, bound to the end and the new.
The World Serpent, vast and ancient,
A harbinger of the end.
Yet, somehow—rebirth.

“The serpent’s red eyes gleam through the dark.
Burning with ancient fury.
Like an hourglass, as the sand falls.”

The serpent, vast and unyielding.
It slithers closer—25,000 miles of ancient might.
Its red eyes lock with Thor’s.
With a roar that shakes the sky.
Thor charges, Mjolnir in hand.
Jörmungandr strikes—
A venomous lash.
Sharp as a serpent’s hiss.
He feels the weight of the realms.
Each path trembling beneath his feet.
This is his duty, his curse—
To battle fate itself.
Memento mori, Serpent.
Memento vivere, Thor.
The final battle begins.



Through the realms of time, they meet.
Bound for eternity, each step a greater rivalry.
His duty is clear, yet torn within—
The end of all things, or life to begin?
“Seems you’re faltering, Thor—struggling as always,” a voice cackles.
“Do you truly believe you can fight fate?
Against my own flesh and blood, you were never free from me.”

Thor’s grip tightens on Mjolnir.
His fury surges, thunder crackling through his veins.
Can he truly undo the butterfly effect?
The serpent coils, shaking the heavens.
Thor stands firm. Mjolnir in hand. His resolve unbroken.
“By Yggdrasil’s roots, I strike!” he roars.
For this battle is not just for Asgard.
But for every realm beneath Yggdrasil’s shade.

The Walk Home

By Debbie Conroy

On the walk home, me and him.
He walked down the street carefree.
I walked observing every surrounding.

He had his hands in his pockets.
I had my keys tucked tight between my
Knuckles.

He had his headphones on,
Blasting his favourite songs.
I had my earphones in,
Playing the silence of the night.

He only looked straight ahead.
I was double, triple checking my surroundings every minute.

He had the lights switched on the second he got home.
I sat in the dark for half an hour.

He tossed his keys into the key dish.
I was making sure all the doors were locked.

He was too tired to turn on the house alarm.
I typed in the code whilst fighting sleep.

He went straight to sleep.
I made sure to put my scissors under my pillow.



Just One More

By Debbie Conroy

“Just One More Pint.”
Said the man before coming home.
After spending the last of his paycheck.
Leaving his children starving.

“Just One More glass.”
Said the woman before coming home.
And destroying her daughter’s soul until-
She was inconsolable.

“Just One More shot.”
Said the teen boy before crashing his car.
And leaving his family, friends and dog
In shambles.

“Just One More cocktail.”
Said the teen girl before leaving the bar.
Getting into a car.
And never to be seen again.



Micro Fiction

By Cír Doyle

Gender?

Some days she doesn't comprehend gender. On a rare day she feels like she fits the woman's body she was born into. Some days he feels more boy than girl. But most days they feel like a genderless alien sent to observe and understand humanity.

They are failing their mission.



Scars

As I look at the scars you left behind, I know she would have gotten it. She would say as much as she wiped away my tears and cleaned out my cuts, in that caring way only a Granny can. She would have understood. And even if not, she would have supported me. So why can't you?

A Lazy Breeze

"That's a lazy breeze." Said the grey-haired lady, as we clutched our jackets to our chests against the fierce wind's strength. I must have looked confused, because she looked at me with that condescending patience that must have taken years to master. "It'd cut through you for a shortcut."

As our bus arrived, laughter bubbled up in my throat at the ridiculous accuracy of the statement. The type of incorrect nonsense only your granny could make sound correct. My laughter faded as I wished it was you blessing me with these idiosyncrasies. Instead of a random lady I'll never see again.

Perfection

By Cíir Doyle

I am not perfect yet,
Maybe I'll never be.

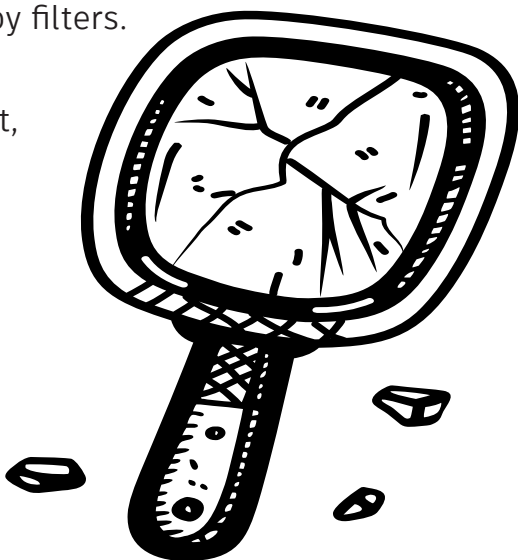
Maybe I'll be forever tainted,
With what could have been?

Perhaps I'll never really know my *shapes*,
Which **lines** and *curves* are real ~

It could be that I'm broken beyond repair,
But I **clearly** can't see the real me.

Like uncanny perfection,
The image is too blurred by filters.

But maybe I'm just perfect,
Imperfectly me.



SENSES

By Liam Reilly

On a quiet street on a winter's evening, we see a man in his mid 30's with slick back hair. A real mafia type. Smoking outside, leaning up against an old-style white Mercedes with brown leather seats. He smokes away while looking in a glass window of a small shop. Looking at the shop keeper, he watches on, as a man in his mid 40's in a long black trench coat pulls the shopkeepers head close to him, as he whispers something in his ear.

The man smoking outside watches on as this happens. He looks around him and sees no one.

He leans away from the car revealing two dead bodies. One in the driver's seat and one in the passenger seat.

He pulls out a .45 Colt and places it behind his back. Then finishes his smoke and stands to the left side of the entrance to the shop, behind a trash can.

A man in his mid 40's walks out in a suit smoking a cigar. It seems he holds some type of power over people. He seems to think everything is fine as he makes his way to his car.

The young man, named Tommy, follows slowly behind, looking cautiously around him. The older powerful man, named Leo, finally makes his way to his car.

He sees the dead bodies and panics. He drops his cigar and puts his hand in his trench coat, reaching for a gun.

Tommy puts the gun to his back.



TOMMY

Don't even think about it.

Tommy pushes him up against a car window.

LEO

(laughs) I don't f%*king believe this who sent you huh.

Tommy reaches in his jacket and takes the gun out and throws it on the floor.

LEO

Who sent you huh, Salvatore?... You know who I f%*king am kid? I promise you I'll burn your whole family's house to the ground and bury everyone you love alive. But I promise you I'll do you no harm if let me go now. I'll forget all about it huh, what do ya say, huh?

Tommy smacks him on the back of the head. Leo groans in pain as he falls to the ground.

LEO

You think you can do this to me? You know who I am? I run this f%*king city!

Tommy flips him over, now facing one another. He points his gun in his face.

He pulls the trigger and the gun jams.

Tommy looks in shock as Leo kicks him in the knee. He falls to the floor as Leo tries to run away.

Tommy picks himself up. Holding his gun while limping, opens the car door and takes out the dead bodies. Pushing them out of the door.

He revs the engine as he looks through the windshield, while Leo runs as fast as he can. Tommy put his foot down on the gas and speeds after Leo.

Tommy knows there's no way out of this for him. He catches right up behind Leo. Tommy smashes the car into his back as Leo goes flying over the windshield.

Tommy stops the car.

As he opens the car door, he sees Leo trying to crawl away. He groans and wheezes with each crawl.

Tommy follows behind him. One shot to the leg, bam!

Leo screams out in pain.

Another shot follows to the leg, bam!

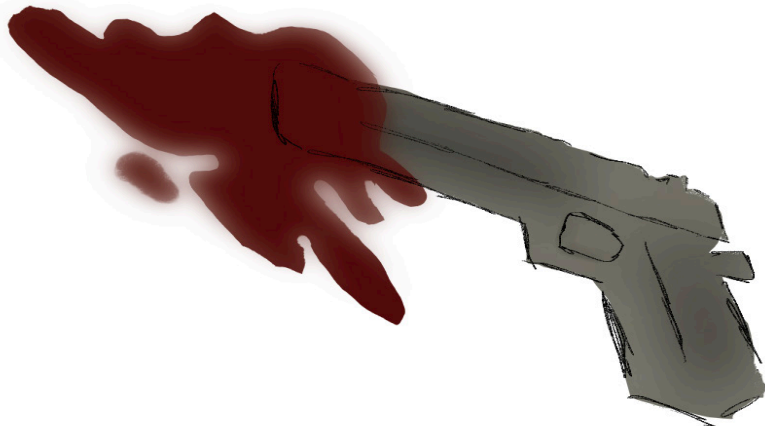
The last shot in the head, finishes him. Bam!

He stops crawling.

Tommy pops him two more times.

Bam!

Bam!



The blood flows under him, covering part of the road.

Tommy looks up and sees a mother and child on the sidewalk.

They are frozen in shock, terrified, afraid to even move.

Tommy puts his gun away. He then reaches into Leo's jacket and pulls out an envelope full of money. He tosses it over and the mother catches it. She gulps as Tommy drives off.

Tommy walks into a coffee shop to a man sitting there smoking. He slides over an envelope, as Tommy stands over him.

Tommy speaks.

TOMMY

That's the last. I'm done Jimmy.

JIMMY

Listen kid were going to take over this city soon. Leo was just the start. Soon Tommy, you're going to have your own crew, be a boss. This empire I'm building is something you will be a part of, I trust you more than anyone.

.....

To be Continued.

Blood & Rose

By Isabella Harley

The round mahogany table glinted with secrets,
A breath hangs heavy in the room,
Whispers snake through the silence,
Is it the Queen's sly smile, the Jack's deceptive grin,
The Ace's steady gaze, or the King's calculating eyes?
A shadow moves behind his eyes,
A game of shadows, where only one can rise,
The Queen watches with wary grace,
The Jack's smirk tightens,
The Ace sharpens his breath—
Each glance a dagger,
Each heartbeat a gamble.

The King steps forward with a smile that never reaches his eyes.
His heart, a void, stained with darkness,
Vivamus moriendum est, whispers the air—
The Ace moves with precision,
Each motion clawing through the silence,
Justice burning in his veins.
The King's scarlet irises swirl,
A pit of nothingness,
Dark murmurs rise,
"I love you, Ace," he whispers,
Holding a rose, thorned with lies.

The king steps forward with feigned innocence.
His heart bleeds black,
Vivamus moriendum est,
The ace moves his hand in a claw-like manner,
For a thirst of justice,
Igniferus stirs within his veins.
King's scarlet irises swirl into pools of haunting nothingness.
A pit that descends into a dimension of dark murmurs,
"I love you, Ace," he murmurs,
as he tenderly holds a rose, thorned with deceit.



Cupid's Whisper

A Haiku, by Isabella Harley

Pristine wings flutter,
Arrows make my voice stutter,
Eros guides them all.

Dancing Through Life

By Maria Wren

It always comes to me at some point late. Late at night when my mind is tired and can't tell the difference between sadness and exhaustion. I will always remember the day when my feet touched the hard wood floor for the first time. My heels were still soft, and I wasn't used to my toes feeling so cold. I remember my reflection staring back at me through the big studio mirrors and before I knew it, I was dancing my way through life.

I remember my girls and all the messing we did. We always used to try and pull off the tricks we had seen on telly. But it always ended up with a pile of giggles. It was always more laughing than talking but that didn't matter. For us, dancing was our way of saying the things we couldn't say with words. It's beautiful really, thinking back. For people so young, being able to express themselves with no words at all. It probably seems mad for other people. But it's all I've ever known.



As the years went by, our passion grew stronger. We watched each other's stories unfold through movement.

I grew older and my love had soon turned into an evil infatuation. My reflection, that once stared back at me with big innocent eyes could now only see what I had eaten for breakfast that morning... The morning before that and every other morning that year. The longer I stared, the more I noticed. My legs looked too long for my body and my knees were covered in dry skin that wouldn't go away. No matter how hard I tried. I wanted to dance it out like I always used to. But felt I had lost all control.

My routine had changed for the first time in years. Instead of watching my girls tell their stories, I was admiring their perfect bones. How graceful and elegant their legs hit the ground. How their knees were smooth and backs all soft. 'Get yourself together' I used to scream in my head. But before I knew it, the war had started.

Every day when I left for class I felt weaker. Not just my body, but also my mind. I couldn't read the girls' stories anymore. I couldn't tell my own either.

My passion for dance was slowly leaving me and the guilt was taking over. I knew I couldn't do it anymore. But I forced myself to persevere. 5, 6, 7, 8. These beats that I've been focused on my whole life. What a waste to just leave it all behind.

It's embarrassing to say how many hours I had spent in the studio with my passion lying dead inside of me. But I just couldn't let it go. I couldn't stand letting go of all those different versions of myself. Those walls that contain my deepest memories.

The giggles, the stories, the tears and the big studio mirrors that captured my reflection grow. I couldn't abandon it. Not yet.

I knew I had to make a deal with myself to stop my mind from fighting. One last dance. A final dance for the walls to capture. One more story to tell. I wanted to make myself proud. The little girl who stood in front of that mirror for the first time. I wanted to prove to her that it wasn't all a waste.

I won't ever forget the last time I left for class. The sting of the salty tears that ran down my cheeks. I remember walking in those doors and feeling my feet grow colder. A sensation I'd miss but hoped I'd never feel again. My guilt spilled out with every breath I took. 1, 2, 3, 4. I could feel the air dancing around me. One last dance together. 5, 6, 7, 8. I knew in my heart that I had to say goodbye.

My days went by so slowly after that. I didn't know how to breathe anymore. The dance studio was so suffocating but without it I thought that I'd be without air. Though, every day that past, I was left with a stronger sense of freedom. Surprisingly enough, dance never really left me.

Although my brain forgets the French of classical ballet. I still find myself performing for the milk and eggs whenever I open the fridge. My mind still recites its years of choreography whenever one of my old songs comes on the radio. It's quite funny really, my mam thinks I'm mad for remembering it all. She never fails to point out my fingers swaying, mimicking the moves. I used to think I abandoned the most precious part of myself, but It's all still with me, every bit of it.

I get scared sometimes that I'll never get over it. That feeling of never recovering from the damage that the war had caused. I used to think the reflective shards would end up killing me some day, but this simply wasn't the case. Yes, I still notice the scars on my feet and the dry skin on my knees. But my reflection has given up on taunting me. Though what stands out to me the most is how my eyes stare back at me differently now. They don't appear as jaded as they used to. And each day that goes by, they luminate more and more. My eyes reminded me that dancing wasn't all that life had to offer. And that the things I'm passionate about don't have to destroy me. I found my passion for listening. I learned that the girls and I can still tell stories and listen to each other over coffee and a treat. The only thing we ever compete for now is which one of us would be the most likely to pull Paul Mescal. I found my passion for baking. I'm no longer afraid of tasting the treats that I make. I found my passion for writing. The stories I used to tell through actions are now on paper for everyone to see.

But what I hold the closest to my heart is my newfound passion for life. This passion that fills my eyes staring back at me as if my heels were still soft. Making me realise I never stopped dancing through it all.



Dancing With the Grim Reaper

by Debbie Conroy

I dance with the Grim Reaper.
He dips me so gracefully.
His sweet kisses are so addictive.
But when we're apart I dread every moment.

So, every night I dance with him.
He holds me close and tight.
He may be freezing, but it's alright.
As long as I can continue dancing.

He takes me to bed with him.
Holding me close under his cloak.
His bones shaking as he undresses me.
The Grim Reaper has taken me.

This dance was my last.
My body can dance no more.
My soul is gone, as is my hope.
Please give me a good final ball.

For you all know I love dancing.
Even if this dance costed me my life.
I'm sorry I couldn't hang up my pointes.
For he swooned me with his knife.



Tales of the Underwater Kingdom: Ronan's First Adventure

by Ross Murphy

Ronan was thoroughly enjoying his summer holidays. With no school to worry about, it was the best time of the year. He loved hanging around the coastal town of Clontarf, talking to people and hearing their stories. He did not have a particularly exciting life himself, or at least, that was what he believed at the time. But all of that was about to change.

One day, while Ronan was having his usual lunch, a ham sandwich, and looking out to sea from a bench in Dollymount, a seal appeared at the edge of the water.

"Hello there," she said through gulps of water.

Ronan looked around to see where the voice had come from because it couldn't possibly be the seal speaking.

"Hey! Over here!" the voice called again. Ronan could not believe it. This seal was talking! Even more shocking, she seemed to know his name.

"Hello," he said hesitantly, his deep voice betraying his disbelief.

The seal continued, "Would you like to go for a swim?"

"Who are you, and how in God's name are you talking to me?" Ronan demanded. He looked around, hoping someone else was witnessing this bizarre event.

"Oh, I'm here all right," the seal assured him. "But not to worry. Nobody else can hear us."

Ronan's mind raced. "How did you learn to talk? You're just a seal!"



“We can all talk,” she replied. “But not many humans can understand us. Only people with extra-aquatic powers like you.”

“My name is Ronan,” he said. “I can’t swim, and you must have the wrong guy.”

“Did you never think about what your name means?” The seal inquired. “Even though you don’t realize it yet, you can swim. I’ll show you how.”

Ronan thought for a moment. This was getting stranger by the second. “What does my name mean?”

“I will tell you” the seal said, flipping her fins toward him. “It means that you are a seal, like me. By the way, my name is Marina. Now, are we going for this swim or not? How long do you humans take for lunch?”

Ronan looked at Marina with both confusion and curiosity. He had finished his ham sandwich, and before he could fully grasp what was happening, he felt an inexplicable force take over. Without another word, he plunged into the sea.

The moment he hit the water, Ronan felt a strong tingling sensation in his feet. When he looked behind him, he saw a sleek, black rubbery body. His hands had turned into flippers! He had been transformed into a seal. He felt confused and terrified, yet, oddly, at home.

“There you are, Ronan,” Marina said behind him. “Now, follow me. You paddle with your front fins and use your back flipper to push forward.”

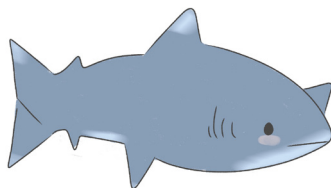
With that, she shot away. Ronan, not wanting to be left behind, tried it. They swam out into Dublin Bay, and to his astonishment, he felt completely at ease in the water.

As they swam near the Wooden Bridge in Clontarf, a shark suddenly appeared, mouth wide open, teeth glistening.

Ronan panicked and darted away, hiding behind one of the bridge posts. The shark eventually swam off, and Marina reappeared.

“Ronan! Thank goodness you’re all right!” she exclaimed. She then noticed more sharks gathering in the bay.

“We have to get out of here before they come for us!” Ronan gasped.



“Yes,” Marina agreed. “We must warn the Kingdom of Howth of a possible attack.”

They swam deeper towards Howth, where Marina led Ronan through a hidden underwater tunnel that led to Ireland’s Eye. As they emerged, a majestic castle made of seashells appeared, surrounded by mermaids and mermen.

“Where am I?” Ronan asked.

“The Underwater Kingdom of Howth,” Marina replied.

A mermaid named Shelly approached. “You must meet King Neptune.”

Ronan and Marina were escorted by sea horses to the grand palace, where King Neptune, an imposing figure with a golden trident, sat on his throne.

“Why have you come to my kingdom, human?!” he bellowed, making Ronan flinch. Seeing his fear, Neptune softened. “Apologies. We’ve never had a human here before.”

“Marina brought me to warn you about Sharkis,” Ronan said. King Sharkis was the most evil Shark that had ever existed in all of Shark-dom. His sole intention was to rule Dublin Bay with an army of evil sharks under his direct command, and to control it with an iron fin.

The court gasped. Neptune immediately deployed his sea horse army, but the sharks were nowhere to be found.

Unknown to them, the evil King Sharkis had hidden his forces near the land, plotting his attack.

That night, the sharks, disguised as merfolk, infiltrated the kingdom and set off fireworks, causing chaos. In the confusion, Ronan was caught in a net and taken hostage. Marina, witnessing his capture, whistled for her dolphin friends—Bubbles, Coral, Delphi, Pebbles, and Aria.

“Marina, what’s wrong?” Aria asked.

“Ronan has been captured by Sharkis! We must save him!”

“We’re in!” Bubbles exclaimed.

The sharks, dragging Ronan away, were caught off guard by the five dolphins charging toward them. The dolphins headbutted the sharks, biting at their tails. Amid the chaos, Marina sliced through the net, freeing Ronan.

“Marina! Thank goodness!” he gasped. “How did you find me?”

“With help from my friends. Are you all right?”

“I think so. But what now?”

The dolphins knocked the sharks unconscious, forcing Sharkis to flee in disgrace. King Neptune’s army captured the rest of the sharks, imprisoning them in underwater cages.

Marina turned to Ronan. “It’s time to take you home.”

“Oh,” Ronan said, disappointment in his voice. “Will I ever come back?”

“Only if we need you,” Marina promised.

Ronan reluctantly swam ashore, transforming back into a human. Later, sitting on the beach, he googled the meaning of his name: Ronan – ‘Little Seal’.

He smiled, thinking about his adventure.

Maybe his life wasn’t so ordinary after all.

flights of stairs

By CíR Doyle

Tap. Tap. Tap.
Echoes my cane,
But still, I climb.

Inequality gap,
Adds to the throbbing in my
brain,
As I take each step at a time.

A, B, C
Left with three choices,
Which one to pick?

Should I give up and flee?
Or B) fight and rally Voices?
Or push through with my trusty stick?

Push on through,
Push through the pain,
The tiredness and fear.
Hope no one sees the tears.



An Article Extract: (In)Accessibility in FET

By Cír Doyle

What do you think of when you think of college students? Do you see a group of late teens, early twenty-something year olds smiling, laughing with one another, raising their hands in a big lecture hall, looking stressed over books in a library. You may not be thinking of someone like me. A 32 year who has dropped out of college three times already due to medical issues, praying that the fourth time is their lucky shot.

In September, I entered a daunting building filled with people, walking stick in hand. To be fair to the college, the building itself isn't actually daunting. It is more so what this building represents that is daunting to me. As a former "gifted child", this year means finally getting to say I have a third level education when asked in official documents, like the census. I consider myself an educated person, but without any formal certificate, it feels like I am not taken seriously. You don't need a certificate to be educated, but it feels like our society hasn't gotten this memo. But this is my chance. This course is a means of taking back my education. This building is my route to proving that I can be disabled and educated.



You don't have to be in any college long to see why disabled people have some of the lowest levels of education in society. There is always some permit, some law, some tradition or another preventing institutions from being wholly accessible. But here's the thing, every excuse an institute hides behind, is just another barrier to the success of a disabled person. The difference being, after the awkward conversations finish, those in power get to walk away, disabled people? Well, they have 3 choices: push through despite the inaccessibility, fight for access or give up.

The common result in these three choices: the disadvantaged are left exhausted.

In the Republic of Ireland, Further Education and Training Colleges (FET) fall under the Education and Training Board Ireland (ETBI). These FET colleges are designed to provide a valuable alternative to those who are less suited to the more traditional education system, or wish to up-skill in a subject area. Yet it doesn't appear that our education population reflects our societal population diversity. A report by SOLAS in 2023 showed that 6.8% of students in FET reported having at least one type of disability. In contrast, according to the National Disability Authority more than 1 in 5 people in Ireland have a disability, a 13.2% discrepancy. A 2024 AHEAD report notes that the number of disabled students in FET is increasing. So how are the colleges coping with these increases?

Dr Joe Collins, Director of Further Education and Training in the ETBI, said "Creating a truly inclusive environment comes with challenges, many of which stem from historical infrastructure limitations, resource constraints, and the need for continuous awareness and training. Retrofitting older buildings to meet modern accessibility standards, for example, can be complex, as can ensuring that all digital and learning resources are fully accessible. Additionally, fostering a culture of inclusion requires ongoing engagement with students and staff to identify and address barriers as they arise."

This sentiment is reflected in the findings of the AHEAD report. Several challenges contribute to FET Colleges delivering quality and consistent accommodations for disabled students.

Some of the most reported difficulties include that of staffing, resources and capacity building. And indeed, when talking to multiple staff in an ETB on Dublin's north side, I encountered them lamenting the lack of meaningful training when it came to identifying and supporting disabled students. But Dr Collins has reassured "there are several initiatives within ETBI that are making a meaningful impact. Following the launch of the Reasonable Accommodations in Further Education and Training (RA in FET) Research in June 2024, AHEAD, in collaboration with ETBI, has developed a set of evidence-

based self-review tools to help ETB's strategically reflect on and improve the quality and consistency of reasonable accommodations for disabled learners."

If you delve into the ETBI's website you will find that, as well as developing guides to help students transition into college, AsIAm, the national autism charity, has worked with ETB's in developing guides for staff.

Some other tools, Dr Collins discussed were "A Maturity Model for ETB provision of FET disability support services, along with a user guide. A checklist to self-review how disability supports are communicated to learners via ETB websites and social media platforms. A checklist to self-review ETB reasonable accommodations policies."

Since 2021, there also has been a push by ETBI for a more inclusive model of education, with the launch of their Universal Design for Learning guide. UDL not only aims to help disabled students, but all students by focusing on learner strengths and reducing the need for individual accommodations. The adoption of Universal Design (UD) principles in teaching and learner support services continues to expand.

Dr Collins was encouraging saying "The widespread uptake of Digital Badges in UD for Learning and UD Beyond the Classroom by FET practitioners is helping to ensure that all learners benefit from an accessible and supportive learning environment tailored to diverse needs. All 16 ETBs have committed to using these resources as part of a self-review process, fostering collaborative dialogue across different areas of each ETB to enhance provision.

In addition, a 2-hour self-directed short course on Reasonable Accommodations and Needs Assessment is nearing completion and will be available in the first half of 2025."

Though it's clear to see the implementation of UDL can vary amongst tutors, with some subjects lending themselves to the process more readily than others.

When talking to Media students in Coláiste Dhúlaigh, a number of them noted how helpful the use of UDL had been in several classes. Many of them singling out one module in particular.

The Media Analysis module was praised by several students for the classes feeling particularly neuroaffirming and accommodating. One student said “I love how we are allowed to submit assignments in different ways. Like I know you enjoyed writing an assignment, but I found that so daunting and really appreciated being able to give a presentation instead.”

Likewise, another student praised the tutor’s use of speech-to-text in class. “The use of Microsoft’s close captions in class is great when teaching us. Being able to read what he is saying on the projector means I can process so much more due to my delayed auditory processing” said Isabella Harley.

Small acts like these and allowing students to fidget can be so helpful to Neurodivergent students in particular. But what happens when the building is not accessible? Among AHEAD and SOLAS it is recognised that buildings are not always accessible for those with physical disabilities.

In AHEAD’s 2024 report “Reasonable Accommodations in FET Scoping Survey” it was recommended that SOLAS and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science create a dedicated capital funding stream to help with this barrier.

Accessibility is an issue in many ETB’s who are custodians of older buildings, for example Coláiste Dhúlaigh on Dublin’s north side, who are only now receiving lift access, which has been in the pipeline for almost 20 years.

One student reports serious difficulties in navigating between different floors of the Coolock campus, she says “I have chronic pain, and the strain of these physical conditions flares the pain up so much. I do not think I should have to choose between preserving energy and eating lunch in the canteen.”

A representative from the National Learning Network expressed that it would be useful for courses to disclose any accessibility issues in advance, for example in prospectuses, but that this could cause difficulties as some courses might not have room designations until the semester begins.

So where does the responsibility lie? Several staff members are of the opinion that the government is not doing enough, that the ETBI is doing all it can with the resources it has.

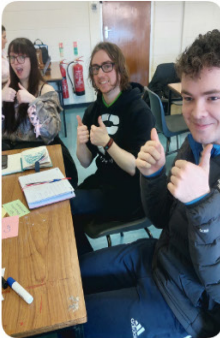
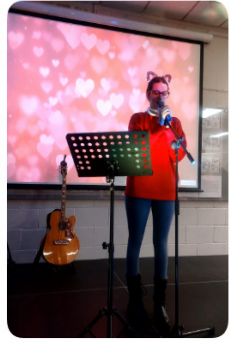
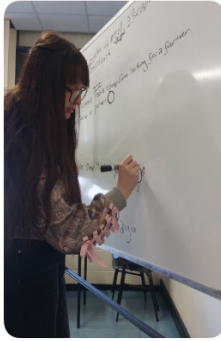
Dr Collins is enthusiastic about the commitment of the ETBI to accessibility “More broadly, ETBI remains committed to ensuring that accessibility is not just about compliance but about fostering an environment where all students can thrive. We continue to work closely with the sector, student representatives, and advocacy groups to identify areas for improvement and implement meaningful change”.

Every stakeholder has the potential to help students. Even if that’s in small ways like turning on the speech-to-text option on a presentation or allowing students to write an answer instead of having to speak out loud.

There is always some way of helping to improve accessibility. Disabled students are constantly trying to figure out how to balance their disabilities. If institutions made consistent changes, it would put them on a more even playing field with their non-disabled peers. And maybe the energy saved could go into completing assignments or enjoying their lives outside of college.

This is a change we all can make if we work together towards small, consistent improvements. So next time you have the opportunity to improve accessibility, think of us with our three choices; push through, fight for access or give up.





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scan the QR Code**



Join us in reading this wonderful collection of stories, poems and other works of Creative Chaos, by the Coláiste Dhúlaigh Creative Writing Students 2024/25.

Or **listen** on the college SoundCloud via the QR Code below



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An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
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