



Imam Khomeini (Founder of Iran's Islamic Republic)
Quds belongs to Muslims and must be returned to them.

Arts & Culture

Ireland and the healing power of words in a time of crisis

Ireland has sought solace in its poetic tradition to overcome the coronavirus crisis and provide poignant words of hope to tackle grief and the hardship of lockdown.

Verse is ingrained in public health messaging, doorstep banners quote hopeful lines, and the state broadcaster rounded out news of one death toll with a lyric assuring: "Everything is going to be alright."

"Poetry is just imbued in Irish society very very strongly and we turn to it at these kind of times," poet Catherine Ann Cullen told AFP.

Ireland has suffered a relatively modest 1,571 deaths from COVID-19 according to the latest Department of Health figures.

But it still faces a long road out of lockdown which began on March 28.

A government scheme to reopen the nation will reach its final steps in August.

Crisis mantras

In the opening weeks of the lockdown, Nobel prize-winning poet Seamus Heaney's promise of reward for endurance struck a chord across Ireland.

"If we winter this one out, we can summer anywhere," was a message which appeared on handmade banners, scrawled on Dublin walls and multiplied on social media.

Taken from an interview with Heaney in 1972, it referred to 'The Troubles' over British rule of Northern Ireland which by its end in the late-1990s killed 3,500.

In the current health crisis, the quote found new resonance.

"It's like a little meditation, it's like a little mantra," said Cullen, Poetry Ireland's current poet-in-residence.

"They give us a kind of hope," she said of such lines.

One month into the lockdown, the Irish poet Eavan Boland died.

That left fans to reflect on a body of work which also draws on Ireland's difficult history, while offering solace in the present.

Her 1994 poem, 'This Moment,' was shared on social media as a memorial, sparking hope for those in isolation with its depiction of a neighborhood at dusk.

"Things are getting ready to happen/out of sight," it reads.

Remedying loneliness

In April, Poetry Ireland partnered with the charity Alone which supports solitary older people, many currently "cooing" from the coronavirus.

The elderly in lockdown were invited to request poetry recitals by phone from writers.

Testimony from the event reveals the comfort taken in the exchanges, where Boland's work was a popular choice.

"My aunt got dressed up and made up for the occasion and was completely delighted," one family member said in feedback to the organization.

In Ireland, memorized snippets of such poems can function like Bible verses – to be memorized and presented for their enduring wisdom and comfort.

"For my mom it was also a complete thrill," the family member added.

Poetic politics

In Ireland, poetry and politics have long been intertwined. The 1916 uprising which began the path to independence from Britain is often called 'The Poet's Revolution' after the number of artists involved.

Now, poetry has become embedded in crisis officialdom – in political speeches and public health messaging, weighing them with a sense of gravitas.

Prime Minister Leo Varadkar has replaced his usual understated rhetoric with poetic stylings – borrowing heavily from the verse of Heaney.

"These words have provided inspiration to many Irish people as we deal with this emergency," he said in an April address to the nation.

"They remind us that we are in this together, we can get through it, and better days will come."

Meanwhile, the work of President Michael D. Higgins – a published poet – has been embedded in adverts by Ireland's health service imploring the public to "hold firm."

"Historically we're a very poetic society," explained Cullen.

"People turn to poetry in times of crisis."

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» Editor-in-Chief: Kambakhsh Khalaji
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Minister: International Quds Day, opportunity to renew allegiance to Lt. Gen. Soleimani's aspirations

Arts & Culture Desk

The International Quds Day, celebrated on the last Friday of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, is an opportunity to renew allegiance and pay homage to the aspirations of top Iranian commander, Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was martyred in airstrikes by the US in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad in January.

He aspired to make the Middle East a region free of war, full of peace, and a place where the apartheid Zionist regime does not exist, added Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi in a post on his Twitter account to mark the International Quds Day, IRNA reported.

He added, "Each drop of Lieutenant General Soleimani's blood offers the guarantee that his aspiration will be fulfilled. Let's endeavor to make it happen."

An initiative by Imam Khomeini, the



IRNA

late founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, International Quds Day is annually marked by millions of Muslims around

the globe as a unique occasion and opportunity to express solidarity with Palestinians and condemn Israeli atrocities.

The city of Quds, Muslims' first Qibla (the direction towards which Muslims face when saying their prayers) was occupied by Israel in 1948, being taken away from its real owners – the Palestinians.

The US assassinated Lt. Gen. Soleimani, who was the commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), in airstrikes at the Baghdad International Airport, which also killed eight other people.

In the aftermath of the tragic event, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei called for reciprocal and proportionate military action against US interests in retaliation for its heinous crime against the Iranian commander.

As part of Iran's revenge, IRGC targeted the US airbase of Ain al-Asad in Al-Anbar Province in western Iraq.



IRNA

Maestro Tjeknavorian Iran's candidate for Special Books for Peace Award

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian-Armenian composer and conductor Loris Tjeknavorian has been nominated as Iran's candidate for the Special Books for Peace Award 2020.

Iran's International Art for Peace Festival (IRAN A.F.P.F.) has nominated Tjeknavorian as Iran's candidate for the award presented by the Commission Books for Peace, IRNA reported.

IRAN A.F.P.F. was announced to be among the winners of the Special Books for Peace Award 2019 for its efforts to promote the culture of peace ahead of its seventh edition (held on September 21, 2019).

Tjeknavorian was awarded an 'Art for Peace' insignia by IRAN A.F.P.F. in 2019.

The Iranian-Armenian maestro has an international reputation. In 2004, he held two concerts in France to collect aid for people in the earthquake-stricken city of Bam in central Iran. In recent years, he

has also staged concerts in Iran and the US in support of Iranian children suffering from cancer.

The Commission Books for Peace offering the responsibility of selecting Iran's candidate for its Special Books for Peace Award 2020 to IRAN A.F.P.F.

Headquartered in the Italian capital of Rome, the Commission Books for Peace is a partner of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It comprises a number of non-governmental organizations which cooperate with UNESCO. Since 2017, it has begun offering an annual prize titled 'Special Books for Peace Award' in memory of the Mexican journalist Javier Valdez Cárdenas (1967-2017) who was shot dead by unidentified gunmen in Mexico. He used to fight drug smuggling.

The Special Books for Peace Award is presented to those individuals and groups that help promote the culture of peace and carry out humanitarian activities.

Thai artist's 'restless hands' takes coronavirus battle to the streets

A Thai street artist has been paying tribute to the fight against the coronavirus with murals depicting a winged character dressed as a health worker looming over a spiky image of the virus restrained by a padlocked red cross.

The 37-year-old street artist who goes by the name 'Mue Bon,' which translates as restless hands, says his murals also serve as a reminder that efforts against the virus are not over and everyone has a role, Reuters reported.

"I want to play my part in reminding people about the situation and recording the history that we helped each other by staying home to stop the spread of the virus," he added.

Mue Bon hopes his artwork, which usually contains a social message, will

reach people who otherwise might not have access to galleries or other places to see art.

"There is a huge gap between art and the ordinary people," he said, taking a break from spray-painting a wall. "I put the artwork on the streets, at places where people sitting in cars will see it while driving past."

While not a household name in Thailand, Mue Bon has had international success and his work has been displayed in Japan, the US, Germany, and, most recently, in the Palestinian territories.

Thailand has recorded just over 3,000 cases of the novel coronavirus and 56 deaths though the rate of infection has been slowing.



JUARAWEE KITTISILPA/REUTERS

A mural, dedicated to the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), depicting characters making efforts to keep the virus at bay, painted by Thai street artist Mue Bon, is seen in Bangkok, Thailand, on May 21, 2020.

Weather



37 18

Amol



36 23

Jiroft



31 16

Ramsar



34 19

Shahriar



33 16

Shiraz

33[^]
21^v

Tehran



31 17

Dushanbe



44 28

Mecca



10 4

Moscow



21 16

Tokyo



19 11

Toronto