

Annemarie Ní Churreáin

Ghost-child

Written in response to **Tai Shani**, *Tragodia*

Annemarie Ní Churreáin is a poet from northwest Donegal. Her debut collection *Bloodroot* (Doire Press, 2017) was shortlisted for the Shine Strong Award for best first collection in Ireland and for the 2018 Julie Suk Award in the USA. She is the author of a suite of poems about Dublin titled *Town* (The Salvage Press, 2018).

In 2016 Ní Churreáin was the recipient of an Arts Council Next Generation Artist Award. She was the 2017-18 County Kerry Writer in Residence and the recipient of the inaugural 2018 John Broderick Residency Award. Ní Churreáin has been awarded literary fellowships from Akademie Schloss Solitude, Germany, Jack Kerouac House, Orlando and Hawthornden Castle, Scotland.

The **Temple Bar Gallery + Studios Writing Commission** aims to expand ideas around writing about art by inviting Irish authors to create a series of pieces inspired by the exhibitions at Temple Bar Gallery + Studios. In 2019, TBG+S has commissioned Annemarie Ní Churreáin to make a piece of writing inspired by each of the exhibitions in the gallery programme.

Previous TBG+S Writers include Sara Baume (2015), Claire-Louise Bennett (2016), Gavin Corbett (2017), and Doireann Ní Ghríofa (2018).

The texts are available to download from www.templebargallery.com and printed copies are available in the gallery.

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Ghost-child

after Jochebed

No true sleep tonight, only the leafless cries of my son,
the slime and pitch of his ark floating in the river of my head.

I dream brokenly of water, seeking there what waits to be
drawn like a breath from a poem.

Even in this torn state, I owe my faith to the Spring he first took hold,
like a tendril in the body quoting verse
in ignorance of what
his grief, or mine,
could mean

—I, who once complained,
this I cannot do
and wished for the cherry-blossom fall
along skin, the unfurling
peel of oar-petals splashing sun.

He, my gnarly root,
was born marked as the son of Jochebed, who nursed at the breast for three months,
hiding away when the soldiers knocked.
His sweet heft she denied to the eye of her enemies,
the milk-fat ankles and rippling wrists
(so unlike a prophet).
One day he parted oceans.

If I could spare my ghost-child from imagination
and myself the dread of drowning,
I would sleep the closed sleep of a stone, or a grain of sand.
But the desert roamed by women is a trial of no ordinary kind.
Cold blades split rock.

What will guide my child and I over the dark patches of the river?
Tomorrow I set him out among the bulrushes
before the Pharaoh daughters dress,
I pray for seed by bird-mouth to where
the wind stops still.