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Citation: C.A. Cullen (2025)
Paper Boats. *Sijis* 15: pp. 205-
206. doi: 10.36253/SIJIS-2239-
3978-16616

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Data Availability Statement:
All relevant data are within the
paper and its Supporting Infor-
mation files.

Competing Interests: The
Author(s) declare(s) no conflict
of interest.

*Paper Boats*¹

I fold my poems into boats
to hazard your shore,
an origami flotilla
bobbing towards the occupation.

Between the white creases
some words are legible:
'resistance' on the sail,
'defiance' on the flag.

And when the gunships
spot the word 'freedom'
rushing the coast,
their shells will rupture my fleet.

The boats will sink and then rise,
or erupt skywards and then fall,
scattering rags of verse
across the water.

But I've folded some so carefully
that their blind sides
might float
past security.

Perhaps one will beach
where children have played
and you will spread it
like a map in your hands

¹ *Paper Boats* was inspired by the Gaza Freedom Flotilla project and written for the Sendiana conference, a celebration of Palestine at Liberty Hall, Dublin in May 2018. It was first published in the *Sendiana solidarity broadsheet* which I edited for the conference to fundraise for Gaza Action Ireland. I'm a member of PalFest Ireland, Irish artists supporting Palestine, and the poem is also about the small acts of solidarity that sometimes feel futile but which, taken together, might bring some sense of hope and witness. The poem will be published in October 2025 in my collection *Storm Damage* (Dedalus Press).

and know that someone
whose rage is not brave
will fold poems into boats
to open on your sands

till on every shore
are hands folding boats
and your waters are white
with fleets of our hopes.

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