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and another thing

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*Translations by Kevin Anderson,
Biddy Jenkinson, and Mary O'Donoghue,
with the author*



Cló Iar-Chonnacht
Indreabhán
Conamara

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Tá Cló Iar-Chonnacht buíoch de Fhoras na Gaeilge as
tacaíocht airgeadais a chur ar fáil.



Faigheann Cló Iar-Chonnacht cabhair airgid
ón gComhairle Ealaíon.

Gach ceart ar cosaint. Ní ceadmhach aon chuid den fhoilseachán seo a atáirgeadh, a chur i gcomhad athfhála, ná a tharchur ar aon bhealach ná slí, bíodh sin leictreonach, meicniúil, bunaithe ar fhótachóipeáil, ar thaifeadadh nó eile, gan cead a fháil roimh ré ón bhfoilsitheoir.

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Blackberries

She plucks blood from the briars,
shadowed eyes as bright
as time to come
that has not yet darkened her days.

If I remember rightly, she says,
a year after our return,
the blackberries aren't nearly as sweet
as last year's snow.

The white tide
is high as the sun
surging in her pulse,
and a thorn in her talk,
unbeknownst to her,
skins my fingers.

She wants me to taste
the black sweetness,
bitter as truth
on the tip of my tongue.

If I could take this day
and all the little days
of my life, now gone,
I would; catch time by the throat,
and choke it until it stopped

so she could taste time and again
the leaving light of this day
silent as last year's snow
that never fell (nor will fall)
upon this earth.

Sméara Dubha

Priocann sí braonta fola den sceach,
súile daite chomh glé
leis an am le teacht
nár dhoirchigh a hóige go fóill.

Más buan mo chuimhne, adeir sí,
bliain tar éis filleadh ón iasacht,
níl na sméara chomh blasta in aon chor
le sneachta na bliana seo caite.

Tá gile na taoide
chomh hard leis an ngrian
a líonann gach cuas dá cuisle,
is dealg sa chaint i ngan fhios di
a réabann craiceann mo mhéar.

Ba mhaith léi go mblaisfínn
den mhilseacht dhubh
atá chomh searbh
leis an bhfírinne ghlan
ar bharr mo theanga.

Ó thabharfainn an lá seo
is na laethanta gearra go léir
a tháinig roimhe dem shaol
ach greim scrogaill
a bhreith ar an uain
is é a thachtadh,

go mblaisfeadh sí arís is arís eile
de sholas an lae seo ag dul as
chomh ciúin le sneachta na bliana seo caite
nár bhuail (is nach mbuailfidh)
urlár an tsaoil seo go deo.

Cycle

There I was
half sitt-
ing, half stand-
ing, sideways,
in the saddle, sort of,
backside to the wind,
to the whole childworld
I wished behind me,
clumsy
as Ó Ríordáin's duck,
and you running,
breathless beside me
so I wouldn't fall
headfirst.

(If you ask me now,
I don't think you kept
even a fingertip on the saddle
as you crossed your heart to do;
the only thing that kept me from falling
was my complete faith in you.)

When I finally got the hang
of that awkward contraption
between my legs, I kept on
pedalling the air,
as far away from you
as I could get.

Now and again I hear
in the farthest corner of my memory
your laboured shout after me
sending me off on life's knotted road:

'Keep going, boy, keep going,
and for the love of God,
don't look back.
Don't look back.'

And I didn't.

The last time,
I believe, I was tricked

into believing anything.



Rothar Mór an tSaoil

Bhíos-sa im shuí-
sheasamh,
sceabhach,
sa diallait ar éigin,
tóin le gaoth,
leis an saol leanbaí go léir
ba mhaith liom a fhágaint im dhiaidh,
chomh tuathalach
le lachain an Ríordánaigh,
tusa agus saothar ort
ag rith lem thaobh
sa tslí nach dtitfinn
i ndiaidh mo chinn.

(Ag cuimhneamh siar dom anois air,
is dóigh liom nár choinnigh tú
oiread is barr lúidín sa diallait
mar a gheall tú go sollúnta a dhéanamh,
gurb é mo chreideamh ionatsa amháin
a choinnigh slán sa tsiúl mé.)

Nuair a d'éirigh liom ar deireadh
an t-inneall místuama féim ghabhal
a thiomáint, leanas orm ag treabhadh
thonnta an aeir chomh fada uait
agus ab fhéidir liom dul.

Airím ó am go chéile
san aragal is sia isteach im chuimhne
do ghlaio giorranálach im dhiaidh
dom chur uait ar bhóthar casta an tsaoil:

‘Coinnigh ort, a bhuachaill, coinnigh ort,
is ar chraiceann do chluas,
ná féach id dhiaidh.
Ná féach id dhiaidh.’

Ná níor fhéachas.

An uair dheireanach,
creidim, ar imríodh
cleas sin an chreidimh orm.

Past Master

He taught us bloody poetry,
cutting us with sharp words,
Lepanto, The Siege of Athlone,
The Charge of the Light Brigade,
till we felt his heart
beat in the pulse of the poem,
Don John of Austria coming from the war.

He had no time for the feeble lies
that built high walls between a child's mind
and the great cry of the world:
there were children in Vietnam,
he said, buried alive by thugs
dropped from the sky
who wouldn't waste a bullet
on anything as small,
as piddling as us.

The air was thick as dirt
when I woke that night
with the curtain twisted round my head;
the more I struggled to get out,
the tighter the knot
he had tied on my conscience.

We thought he'd explode
that Monday morning in 1972;
his eyes bulged at what he saw
in front of our eyes, a rubber bullet
fat as a Guard's baton,
black as a horse's prick.

When he drew a lash of the baton
on the desk without warning
we could feel the sweat
on the soles of our feet,
the clamour of blood in my ears
was loud as the silence
you could hear as far away as Derry.

We would never have believed then
that anything as small,
as piddling as death,

could find home or shelter
in the master's heart.

We were receiving confirmation
from the bishop's hand
when we heard the news
that all his rage was spent;
there was a knot in his heart
that no words could undo,
no doctor's hands unravel.

No sooner had the earth dimmed
the light we saw
above his head in battle
than the flying column of his words
deserted the spineless chatter
that melts as quickly now
as sweet lies in my mouth.

No matter how often I call them back,
to show me again that fierce light
that was seen before at Ferdia's Ford,
they are beyond my reach,
those toughtalking words
that could never break that gentle man.

Máistir Dána

Mhúin sé fuilíocht dúinn,
ár leonadh le focail ghonta
Lepanto, The Siege of Athlone,
The Charge of the Light Brigade,
gur bhraitheamar a chuisle féin
ag bualadh fé chraiceann an dáin,
Don John of Austria ag triall ó pháirc an áir.

Níor ghéill don gcur i gcéill
a chuir fál go haer idir aigne linbh
agus goltraí mhór an tsaoil:
bhí leanaí i Vítneam, a dúirt sé,
á gcur ina mbeathaidh
ag ceithearnaigh a tháinig ón spéir,
nárbh fhiú leo piléar a chur amú
ar rudaí chomh beag,
chomh suarach linn fhéin.

Bhí an taer chomh tiubh le cré
nuair a dhúisíos i lár na hoíche sin
le cuirtín trom casta ar mo cheann;
dá mhéid dar fhéachas le héaló
is ea is mó a chuas i bhfastó
sa tsnaidhm a chuir sé ar mo choinsias.

Mheasamar go bpléascfadh sé
maidin Luain i naoi déag seachtó a dó;
d'at a shúil ag stánadh ar an bhfeic
os ár gcomhair amach, piléar rubair
chomh ramhar le truinsean Garda,
chomh dubh le bod capaill.

Nuair a tharraing sé lasc
gan choinne leis ar a dheasc
tháinig allas amach tré bhoinn ár gcos,
bhí torann na fola im chluais
chomh hard leis an dtost
a chualathas chomh fada ó bhaile
le Doire Cholmcille.

Níor chreideamar an uair sin
go bhfaigheadh rud chomh beag,
chomh suarach leis an mbás

faoiseamh ná spás
i gcroí an mháistir.

Bhí ár dtoil á cur againn
fé láimh an easpaig
nuair a tháinig scéala
gur shíothlaigh a ríastradh;
bhí nasc ar a chroí
ná féadfadh focail
ná méara dochtúra a scaoileadh.

Ní túisce a dhoirchigh an chré
an solas a chonaiceamar
os a chionn sa chath
ná chuaigh macra na bhfocal
ar a gcoimeád ón gcaint mheata
a leánn chomh prap
leis an éitheach álainn im bhéal.

Dá mhéid dá bhféachaim
lena mealladh is an ghrian bhorb
a chonacthas tráth ag Áth Fhirdia
a thabhairt leo abhaile,
ní dán dóibh filleadh,
na focail chrua ná féadfadh
an fear bog san a mhíniú.

Deichtine's Daughter

On Newcastle Road, a fairhaired girl
is walking towards town, an ash-stick
swinging in her hand, easy as the lock
of hair dancing on her forehead.

As you'd expect, there's a nick
in the seasoned wood, another
in the girl's cheek, the fire
of combat blazing in her eyes;
her hip bones jut and angle,
turned like the blade of a hurley
that grew unexpectedly in her fist.

Blood will be spilt
when she arrives at Culann's feast.

Iníon Deichtine

Ar Bhóthar an Chaisleáin Nua,
tá cailín fionn ag siúl i dtreo an bhaile,
maide fuinseoige ag sileadh óna láimh
chomh héasca leis an loca
a rinceann ar chlár a héadain.

Tá mant, mar is cóir, san adhmaid críonna,
is marc dá réir ar ghrua na mná,
faghairt na himeartha ina súil
is a cromán chomh casta sa tsiúl
le bais an chamáin
a d'fhás gan choinne ina glaic.

Doirtfear fuil ach a dtiocfaidh sí
chomh fada le cóisir Chulainn.

Catwoman

The cat in her insisted
the filthy pelt
be let in,
dragging its pain
over the threshold
of our dirty looks.

For a whole month
she opened the door
of her heart
to the diseased creature
that crouched by the dish
she left on the window-sill.

When I made fun
of their strange liaison
the sharp claws of her eyes
left raw welts on our love.

Herself was out
and the man next door
replacing the thatch with slates
on the high roof of the world
when the dogs tore
the cat asunder,

and you honestly couldn't tell,
said the kindly neighbour,
whether it was the racking of bones
or the larynx being scrunched
that sounded its voiceless death.

*When the swans fly south,
cutting and bruising the air,
is it the throb of their wings
or the cry of their throats
that proclaims the sky
and all beneath it belongs
by right to the beautiful?*

The catwoman said nothing,
just chewed her claws,
ignoring the kind words

I left out for her that night,
like milk in saucers,
all around the house.

But give her a gun
up on the neighbour's roof
and she'd do for all
the beauty of this world,
scattering its smathered feathers
to the four winds
so that our dogdumb ears
could never forget
the squealing agony
of that wretched thing
we had all wished dead.

Catbhean

Ní cheadódh an cat inti sin
nach dtabharfaí bheith istigh
don mothal lofa
a d'iompair a thinneas
thar tairseach ár ndoichill isteach.

Roinn sí ar feadh na míosa
a nádúr fial leis an bpian
a tháinig go dtí an mhias
a bhí leagtha aici
ar leac na fuinneoige.

Nuair a dheineas beag
den gcaidreamh neamhghnách
nochtaigh a súil inginí géara
a chuir riast ar leiceann ár gcumainn.

Bhí sí féin as baile
is an fear béal dorais
ag cur sclátaí in áit na scolb
ar dhíon ard an tsaoil
nuair a réab na coin
géaga an chait ó chéile,

is níor léir,
adeir mo chomharsa lách,
arbh é stracadh na gcnámh
nó scrios an bhosca ina scornach thiar
a thug guth do bhás an bhalbháin.

*Is an fhuaim ghéar
a ghortaíonn an t-aer
is na healaí ag imeacht ó dheas,
an é buille na sciathán
nó éamh na bpíob a fhógraíonn
gur leis an rud álainn an spéir
is a bhfuil laistíos di go léir?*

Ní dúirt catbhean faic
ach inginí a dhá lapa
a chogaint, gan beann
ar bhainne na bhfocal
a dhoirteas-sa ar fud an tí

an oíche sin ina comhair.

Ach gunna ina glaic aici
ar dhíon na gcomharsan,
scaoilfeadh sí áilleacht an tsaoil
ina clúmh smeartha le gaoth
le nach nglanfaí go deo
dár gcluasa gadhair
an gheoin chráite
a lig créatúr gránna
arbh fhada linn go léir a bhás.

Archaeology

The tip of her finger
barely brushed my elbow,
a touch as soft – no,
softer than that –
as the air stirred
by her fluent walk
down the wooden gangway
of McBrayne's joyless ferry

Yet she left her mark,
like the Viking
whose footprint remains
in the unforgetting earth
at the ford of hurdles,
an amber path
from the metal workshop
to the adulterer's house,
where no trace of man
or woman remains
after each little death.

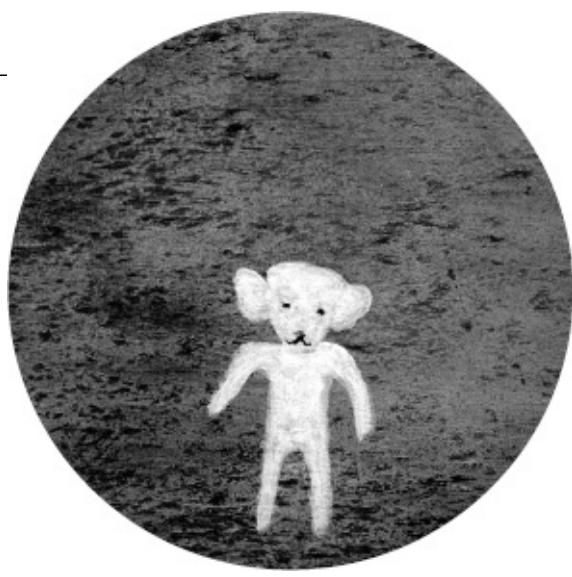
If the ground were dug up now
around the black pool of my heart
below the Corporation buildings,
under Handel's concert hall
and the ascendancy mansions,
right down beneath the foul shambles
and the ruined mud-houses,
they'd find the amber arch
of her instep walking there,
high-heeled shoes
confused in her hands,
her laughter in the street
as bright – no, brighter than that –
as the sun on her face
when she barely brushed my elbow
as she went her way slowly
from the moored longship
of my heart a thousand years ago last night.

Seandálaíocht

Chuimil a láimh
le cupán m'uilleann ar éigin,
tadhall chomh séimh
– níos séimhe ná sin –
le corraíl an aeir
á bhrú i leataoibh
ag siúl éasca a cabhla
is í ag teacht i dtír
ó bháidín dúr McBrayne.

D'fhág ar a shonsan a lorg
mar an Lochlannach fir
a d'fhág a mharc
sa chré shíoraí
ag áth na gcliath,
cosán ómra
ón gceardlann mhiotail
go teach an adhaltranais,
áit ná maireann iarsma
de mhian an duine
tréis a bháis gan aird.

Má bhaintear an chré
de linn dhubh mo chroí,
laistíos d'oifigí an Bhardais,
faoi cheolteach Handel
is na tithe móra go léir,
thíos faoin seamlas bréan
is fothraigh na mbothán dóibe,
gheofar cuar ómra
a coise boinn ag siúl,
bróga sálarda ag dul
thar a chéile ina láimh,
a gáire chomh lonrach sa tsráid
le dath na gréine ar a héadan
– níos gile ná sin, a dhuine –
nuair a chuimil a méar
le faobhar m'uilleann
ar éigin is í ag imeacht
gan deifir i dtír
ó longphort ceangailte
mo chroí, míle bliain
is an oíche aréir.



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