

STILL – FAIRE

POEMS – DÁNTA
ENGLISH AND IRISH

HELEN SORAGHAN DWYER



Translated
by
Bernadette Nic an tSaoir



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DEDICATION



In loving memory of my mother, May
I ndilchuimhne ar mo mháthair May



and in gratitude to my brother, Patrick
agus dom dheartháir Patrick le buíochas

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	<i>VIII</i>
SREBRENICA: AFTERMATH	10
SADNESS	14
TERRORIST	16
IRELAND 2009	18
THIS ROOM	20
NOW	22
PRISON	24
ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY	26
HAUNTED	28
NOTHING	30
INTO THE LIGHT	32
LAST	34
STILL	36
LIVING WILD	38
WALKING DOWN THE AISLE	40
CLAY	42
WALKING WITH GHOSTS	44
THE SET OF YOU	46
IF IS A VERY BIG WORD	48
REVISIT	50
MEN	52
JOHN	54
HOPE	56
SUNSET	58
TELL ME	60
NAMELESS	62
TAKEN	66
WAITING	68
BUCHAREST	72
EARTH MOTHER	74
EVENTUALLY	76
HELEN SORAGHAN DWYER	79

CONTENTS

I NDIAIDH SREBRENICA	12
DOBRÓN	15
SCEIMHLITHEOIR	17
ÉIRE 2009	19
AN SEOMRA SEO	21
ANOIS	23
FAOI GHLAS	25
TIMPISTÍ AGUS ÉIGEANDÁLAÍ	27
TAIBHSÍ	29
FAIC NA NGRÁST	31
I DTREO AN TSOLAIS	33
CRÍOCH	35
FAIRE	37
FIA-BHEATHA	39
SIÚL SIOS	41
CRÉ	43
COMHLUADAR TAIBHSÍ	45
DO DHEALRAMH	47
DÁ DTITFEADH AN SPÉIR	49
ATHCHUAIRT	51
NA FIR	53
JOHN	55
DÓCHAS	57
LUÍ NA GRÉINE	59
INSINT	61
GAN AINM	64
SCIOBADH	67
FANACHT	70
BUCHAREST	73
MÁTHAIR CHRÉAFÓIGE	75
AR DEIREADH THAR	77
HELEN SORAGHAN DWYER	80

FOREWORD

This bilingual collection introduces an original and welcome voice to poetry in Ireland. It combines shrewd observation with incisive poetic control that views the human condition in a realistic, graphic and moving way.

Poems like *Haunted* ('when ghosts come roaring in') illustrate a use of muscular and truly poetic language that sears itself upon the imagination.

Liam MacUistin
Poet, author, playwright

POEMS – DÁNTA

SREBRENICA: AFTERMATH

In memory of the blond boy shown on T.V. news footage filmed just before the massacre and all the boys and men of Srebrenica.

They pointed their rifles
And told you to go.
Your body obeyed
But your mind screamed –
No, I am not guilty
I have done no wrong.
I'm sixteen years old,
This is my home.

You had no weapons,
Nowhere to hide,
Force-marched to the field
Where you played as a child.

All the village boys all the village men
Gone to mass graves.

Now forensic archaeologists
From the U.N.Commission
Have found enough of your DNA
To place in a coffin.

The crowd parts as you are brought home again
With all the village boys all the village men,
Interred with dignity this time.

After years of waiting,
Now your mother knows for sure
You will never come bounding
Through her doorway
Into her arms again,
Hair lightened by the sun
Scent of summer on your skin.

Gone forever
Like all the village boys all the village men.

On nights too sad for sleeping
She calls your name to the sky
And feels what your innocent eyes
Had to witness before they closed
A last time.
Was her name on your lips
As you died?

And not even Heaven can help her or heal her
Nor all the girls and widows of Srebrenica
Still lost in their own world of weeping.

I nDIAIDH SREBRENICA

I gcuimhne ar an mbuachaill fionn do chonac ar an Nuacht díreach sula ndearnadh sléacht ar na fir agus ar bhuachaillí óga Srebrenica.

Dhíríodar raidhfíli
Is dúirt leat imeacht.
Do chorp a bhí umhal
Ach do mheabhair a bhéic –
Nílim, nílimse ciontach.
Níl aon choir déanta agam.
Nílim ach sé bliana déag,
Is é seo mo bhaile.

Tusa gan arm,
Gan chró folaigh,
Brúite sa ghort
Mar a mbiteá i do leanbh ag spraoi.

Fearaibh is garsúin an bhaile ar fad
Anois caite in uaigh na sluaite.

D’aimsigh saineolaithe dlí-eolaíochta
Ó Choimisiún na Náisiún Aontaithe
DNA leatsa, do dhóthain
Lena chaitheamh i gcónra.

Scoitheann an pobal romhatsa arís
Ag teacht abhaile i measc na bhfear,
Á chur sa chré le dignit.

Go deimhin tar éis na mblianta
Anois is ea a thuigeann do mháthair
Nach bhféicfear tusa go deo
D’aon léim thar tairseach
Isteach ina baclainn,
Dath na gréine ar do cheann,
Boladh an tsamhraidh ort.

Tusa bailithe leat go deo
I dteannta na bhfear is na mbuachaillí.

An oíche ró-bhrónach lena súile a dhúnadh
Glaonn sí ortsa i dtreo na spéire,
Mothaíonn go doimhin ina lár istigh
A bhfaca tusa, a lao, roimh dhúnadh na súl
Ar deireadh thiar.
Ar ghlaoiigh tú uirthi féin
Is tú ag imeacht leat?

Anois níl luibh ná leigheas i ndán
Ná fós do bhaintrigh Srebrenica
Is iad ar fán i ndomhan na ndeor leo féin.

SADNESS

*For Sharon Commins and Hilda Kawuki,
aid workers held captive in Sudan for 107 days.*

‘You could die in there, of sadness.’
In that mountain range at night
Sleeping only three minutes at a time
And waking to your captors’ eyes.

You could die of sadness
When they force you to kneel
In the dirt and shoot bullets
Past your head,
Mock execution – again.

You could die of sadness
In the heat of noon
With a blanket your only shade
And at night
A stinking sack for a bed.

You could die of sadness
When you think of home,
Your parents praying,
Allowing no one
To use the phone,
Thinking of nothing but you
Dying of sadness
As those teenage boys
With war-crazed eyes
Watch you
Ever second of your life.

You could die.

DOBRÓN

*Do Sharon Commins agus Hilda Kawuki
a chaith 107 lá i ngéibheann sa tSúdáin.*

‘Gheofá bás den chian ansan istigh.’
Sna sléibhte i gcoim oíche
Snap codlata is dúiseacht
Ag a súile siúd ag stánadh ort.

Gheofá bás den chian
Ar do dhá ghlúin sa láib
Is urchair á scaoileadh
Os cionn do chinn,
Marú bréige – arís.

Gheofá bás den chian
Faoi théamh um nóin,
Pluid mar scáth
Is síneadh ist oíche
Ar mhála bréan.

Gheofá bás den chian
Ag smaoineamh ar an mbaile,
Ar ghuí do mhuintire
Cosc ar ghlaoch ort,
Poll ina smaointe
Ach tú féin amháin
Ag fáil bháis den chian
Ag na déagóirí buile
Ar mire sa chogadh
Ag faire ortsa
Ar gach anáil.

Gheofá bás.

TERRORIST

For Niall Warfield

Today you killed an enemy soldier
From a mile away
With a long-range rifle,
A first in the history of war.
You watched him fall
In a last chance
Dance of death
Into the arms
Of his second-in-command.

Your army press officer
Informed the media –
What an achievement
Good for morale.

Your wife told the neighbours
Her friends too –
So proud of you.

You can't stop telling your mates
How you lined up the shot
Checked the trajectory
Sent him a lead sleeping pill –
Got high on the thrill.

The army switched you on
To kill without a thought.

When the war is over
How will they switch you off?

SCEIMHLITHEOIR

Do Niall Warfield

Inniu do mharaigh tú namhad
É míle slí uait,
An chéad raidhfil fadraon agat
Ó thús na gcogaí.
D’fhéach tú air
Is é ag titim
I rince an bháis
Isteach i mbaclainn
An leascheann feadhna.

An preasoifigeach airm
A d’inis do na meáin –
Gaisce ar ndóigh
Is ardú meanman.

Do bhean adúirt leis na comharsana
Is lena cairde –
Í bródúil asat.

Tusa á insint gan stad
Gur dhein líne don philéir
Sheiceáil an rian
Sheol piollaire suain den luaidhe –
Tú féin sna spéartha.

An t-arm a dhúisigh an adhaint
Go marófá gan scrupall.

An féidir leo an lasc a mhúchadh
Is an cogadh thart?

IRELAND 2009

You worked all day
Driving cattle to higher ground
Now you lie in bed
Exhausted
And listen to the sound
Of your livestock roar in hunger
And they roar all night long
And you never close your eyes
And the floodwaters rise –
Global warming
Blocked up drains
Silted rivers
New flood plains.

At dawn from your bedroom window
You watch new light reveal
Nature's perverted power
As you hear, see, feel
Farmers from famine times
Weeping in these fields.
You shed their tears
And share their pain.

Though centuries pass and causes change
Devastation tastes the same.

ÉIRE 2009

Tusa do thug an lá
Ag seoladh na mb chun farach ard
Tú anois i do luí
Traochta
Ag éisteacht le búiríl ocrais
Iad stiúgtha ar feadh na hoche
Ag búiríl leo go maidin
Aon néal amháin ní bhfuairis
Is na tuilte ag cur thar maoil –
Téamh domhanda
Blocáil draenacha
Aibhneacha líonta le glár
As an nua tuilemhá.

Le breacadh an lae
Trín bhfuinneog léirítear
Ceannas contráilte an Nádúir.
Feirmeoirí an drochshaoil, cloistear iad
Is feictear, braitear iad athuair
Ag olagón sna goirt.
Goileann tusa go cráite leo
I bpáirt lena bpian siúd.

Ní hionann an fáth ach maireann blas an áir
Fós inniu mar a bhí ar dtús.

THIS ROOM

In memory of my mother, May

In this room with no view
Nights seem to outnumber days.
They march through your mind
Like wounded soldiers
Returning from battle –
Tired, bloody, not yet relieved.

In this room with no view
The past lies beside you,
The future is for other people.
Every day hungry dogs
Gnaw your bones relentlessly.

In this room with no view
Indignity introduces herself
On faltering footsteps,
Humiliation sneaks in
With everything you can no longer do.
Outside, they walk in the rain,
Doze on homeward buses –
Never knowing they are blessed.

AN SEOMRA SEO

I gcuimhne ar mo mháthair, May

Sa tseomra dall
Bíonn an oíche i réim.
Siúlann gach lá trí d'intinn
Ina shaighdiúir gonta
Ag filleadh ón gcath –
Tuirseach, fuilteach, fós gan faoiseamh.

Sa tseomra dall
Tú sínte leis an aimsir chaite,
An todhchaí ní bhaineann leat.
Madraí craosacha gach lá
Ag creimeadh do chnámha.

Sa tseomra dall
Níl dignit dá laghad,
Siúlann an náire go tuisleach
Isteach i do shaol
Is lúth na mball ag teip.
Ní heol don scata go bhfuilid beannaithe
Is iad ag bogadh lasmuigh faoin bhfearthain –
Nó ag míogarnach abhaile ar an mbus.

NOW

For Sadhbh and Shane Little

Pain is your only partner now
More than companion
Less than lover.
You sleep together
Rise together
Pull each other through the day,
Remembering, forgetting
Better ways to be.
Years go by too quickly
Each moment is too slow.
In your silent isolation
You can hear
Time passing.

ANOIS

Do Sathbh agus Shane Little

Is leatsa anois an phíolóid
Ina páirtí dílis
Ach ní leannán í.
Codlaíonn is éiríonn
I dteannta a chéile
Ag strachailt leis an lá,
Cuimhneamh, dearmad
Ar an mbóthar bán.
Imíonn na blianta leo de sciúird
Gach neomaitín mar sheilmide.
Laistigh sa tost i d'anam
Cloiseann tusa
An t-am ag séalú.

PRISON

For Lauren and Emmet Dwyer

You lie still, clean and warm.
A nurse takes your pulse.
People call, only close family these days.

You sigh, you smile.
Your blind eyes search the room for sight.
Every day is every night.

You ask me not to leave you alone
In the prison of your body,
In the prison of your home.

FAOI GHLAS

Do Lauren agus Emmet Dwyer

I do luí, glan teolaí.
Banaltra a bhraitheann do chuisle.
Tagann daoine, do mhuintir féin amháin.

Osna uait, miongháire.
In aisce cuardach na súl.
An saol ar fad ina dhubhoíche.

Impíonn tú orm gan tú a thréigint
Anso sa cholainn faoi ghlas,
Anso sa bhaile faoi ghlas.

ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY

Someone is losing too much blood.
Someone's heart is beating again.
Someone is breathing – only just.
Someone's on morphine for too much pain.

Attendants offer tea and toast
And the phones ring on forever,
As heart monitors signal distress calls
Like sinking ships in heavy weather.

TIMPISTÍ AGUS ÉIGEANDÁLAÍ

Fuil den chorp á scairdeadh.
Croí sa chorp ag dúiseacht.
Anáil sa chorp – ar éigin.
Moirfín don chorp i bpian.

Tae is tósta ón bhfreastalaí
Gutháin gan stad ag bualadh,
Glaonna práinne ó mhonatóirí
Mar longa gruama go tóin poill.

HAUNTED

For Patrick Dwyer Jnr and Thigam Padayachee

When ghosts come roaring in
Disturbing the still air of illness
Around your bed
You turn my head
To the darkest corner of your mind
Seeking another day, another time,
Another way of being – now gone,
And hope goes home with the ghosts.

TAIBHSÍ

Do Patrick Dwyer fjr agus Thigam Padayachee

Liúnn na taibhsí
Briseann an támhnéal tinnis
Cois leapa
Tusa a chasann mo cheann síos
Go póirsín dorcha i dtóin intinne
Tú ar thóir lae is aimsir eile
Nach ann anois dóibh – aois nua tagtha,
Bailíonn taibhsí an dóchas leo abhaile.

NOTHING

For Geraldine and Ambrose O'Brien

My mother is dying and there is
Nothing I can do.
I rush to be with her but time
Rushes faster.

I remember as a child she left me
With her sister
Who preferred animals to children.
All day long I sat on the
Garden wall waiting to see her
Turn the corner into our road.
When at last she appeared,
In her city shoes and city coat,
Weighed down with shopping
I ran to her, so fast
I almost tumbled over,
To reach her and hold her again.

Now I rush
Through a hospital corridor.
A weary young doctor bars my way.
I am sorry, he says, there was
Nothing we could do.

FAIC NA nGRÁST

Do Geraldine agus Ambrose O'Brien

Níl faic le déanamh
Is mo mháthair ag fáil bháis.
Táimse ar sodar chuici
Ach an t-am ar sodar leis.

Is cuimhin liom a bheith im leanbh
I dteach áintín liom lá,
Thaitin ainmhithe léi siúd
Seachas páistí.
Mise ar an bhfalla ar feadh an lae
Go bhfeicfinn ag teacht í ag an gcúinne.
Ar deireadh thiar do chas isteach
Gléasta i gcóta is bróga cathrach,
Málaí troma léi.
Do ritheas chuici ar mo dhícheall,
Ba bheag nár thiteas,
Rugas greim docht uirthi.

Rithim chuici inniu
Síos pasáiste san ospidéal.
Dochtúir óg traochta romham amach,
Tá aiféala orm, ar seisean,
Ní raibh faic le déanamh.

INTO THE LIGHT

For Paddy Dwyer

You did go gentle
Into the light
Eyes softly closed
Fluttering sighs
Slipping slowly away –
You died.

I touched the warmth
That stayed
After your soul had left
And thanked God
For the gentleness
Of your life,
The gentleness
Of your death.

I dTREO AN tSOLAIS

Do Paddy Dwyer

D'imigh tusa go séimh
I dtreo an tsolais
Súile dúnta go cneasta
Osnaí ar foluain
Ag sleamhnú leat go bog –
Fuair tú bás.

Leagas méar ar an dteas
A d'fhan
Nuair a d'imigh an dé
Is ghabhas buíochas le Dia
As do chneastacht
Le linn beatha,
As do chneastacht
Le linn báis.

LAST

For Aislinn O'Moore Cunningham

They sent your things from the nursing home
In a box.

I waited two years to open it.
They had washed everything
So your scent was gone
Replaced by the fresh laundry smell
Of no one.

Your makeup bag held forgotten familiar things
You used to the end –
Comb, mirror, lipstick, I smeared some on my hand
To try to remember how it looked on your lips.
I touched it to my face –
Your last kiss.

CRÍOCH

Do Aislinn O'Moore Cunningham

I mbosca a tháinig do ghiuirléidí
Ón dtigh altramais.
D'fhágas é dhá bhliain gan oscailt.
Ní bhfuairéas do bholadh ann
Toisc gach rud nite acu
Is boladh úr anaithnid
Anois ann.

D'aithníos sa mhála beag istigh
An smidiú deiridh –
Cíor, scáthán, béaldath, chuimlíos é sin
Ar thóir íomhá do bheola.
Chuimlíos lem leiceann é –
An phóg dheireanach.

STILL

For Vincent O'Brien

I call your name
Across days and years of absence
Across fields and waves
To space beyond sky and stars.

I call your name
And I listen, listen, listen
For your answer
In the silence –
Still.

FAIRE

Do Vincent O'Brien

Glaoid ortsa i d'ainm
Tú as láthair le blianta
Goirt is tonnta eadrainn
Thar spéartha is réaltaí anonn.

Glaoid ortsa i d'ainm
Is bím ag éisteacht, ag éisteacht i gcónaí
Go gcloiseam d'fhreagra
Sa tost –
Faire.

LIVING WILD

For Bridie Hogan

A mountain breeze
Hushes your mind
Brushes your hair
Blushes your cheeks
Country-girl peach.

Brown leaves
Imitate little birds
As they fly to the floor
Of the world
And watch you from
The short grass.

Ancient trees whisper
The names of lost loved ones
And call them to pray
In the branches above
Your head –
You know
They are not dead
But living wild
And waiting,
Just out of reach.

FIA-BHEATHA

Do Bridie Hogan

Leoithne sléibhe
A chiúnaíonn d'intinn
A scuabann an folt
Luisní id ghrua
Péitse cailín tuaithe.

Duilleoga donna
Mar éiníní
Ag eitilt go talamh
An domhain agatsa
Iad ag faire ort
Ón mhóinéar.

Seanchrainn ag cogarnach
Ainmneacha na marbh seo againne
Ag iarraidh orthu guí
Sna géaga in airde
Os do chionn –
Tá a fhios agatsa
Nach marbh atáid
Ach sa bhfia-bheatha
Ag fanacht linne
Gan bhreith orthu go fóill.

WALKING DOWN THE AISLE

For the Kenny family

Footsteps echo
In the beat of my heart.
Footsteps walking
To the altar.

Then prayers
Hymns
Incense.

Everyone we know is here
Waiting, watching.

Now the long walk
Down the aisle,
Away from the altar
With a white bouquet
In my right hand
And my left hand
On your coffin.

SIÚL SIOS

Do mhuintir Kenny

Macalla coiscéime
I mbualadh mo chroí.
Coiscéim ag siúl
Chun altóra.

Ansan paidreacha
Iomainn
Is túis.

Ár gcairde ar fad anso
Ag fanacht, ag faire.

Siúl fada romhainn anois
Síos i lár an tséipéil,
I bhfad ón altóir
Bláthanna bána
I mo lámh dheas
Is mo lamh chlé
Ar do chónra.

CLAY

In memory of Gerard

The morning after your funeral
As I woke from broken sleep
The first thing I saw was my boots.

The rain that day softened the ground
For your gravediggers.
So typical of you to give them no trouble.
I hope I can forgive them soon
For waiting there like vultures
To get the job done.

Some woman led me away from your grave,
But she couldn't take my sorrow away.

I try to cling to disbelief –
So much kinder than truth.
But that clay, your clay
Still clings to my boots.

CRÉ

I gcuimhne ar Gerard

Suan corrach i ndiaidh do thórraimh
Dhúisíos ar maidin
Chonac mo bhuataisí.

Saoráid ag fir na reilige
De bharr báistí.
Ba dhual duit gan bhráca a chur ar éinne.
Maithfeadsa dóibh é le cúnamh Dé,
Na badhbha ar bís
Chun an jab a chríochnú

Bean éigin do rug ón uaigh mé,
Ní fhéadfaí mo chumha a bhreith léi.

Creidim go daingean nár tharla –
É seo níos fearr ná an fhírinne.
Ach féach fós í ar mo bhuataisí,
An chré, an chré seo agatsa.

WALKING WITH GHOSTS

For Pauline Purcell

It took a long time for you
To visit his grave –
To walk the rural roads
He walked,
To stroll the village street,
To place your hand
On the gate of the country house
Where he used to live.
Smoke is rising from the chimney now
Of the fireside he shared with you
On winters evenings.
Toys dot the lawn.
You gaze at the window
Of the bedroom where he died –
The curtains are drawn.

COMHLUADAR TAIBHSÍ

Do Pauline Purcell

Thóg sé tamall ort
Filleadh ar an uaigh –
Na bóithre siúlta aigesean
A shiúl arís,
Dul thart fan sráid,
Do lámh a leagan
Ar gheata an tí
Mar a mbíodh sé féin.
Deatach anois ón simné
Ón dtinteán mar a gcaitheadh sibh beirt
Tráthnóntaí le chéile sa gheimhreadh.
Bréagáin ar fud an gháirdín.
Féach ar fhuinneog an tseomra
Inar cailleadh é –
Cuirteání druidte.

THE SET OF YOU

In memory of Rita

Your mother has the set of you –
Strong shoulders for a small woman
Your walk, as if coming home
Across fields
On youthful
Summer evenings
From saving hay
And working like a man.

As I embrace her at your funeral
I hold your bones in my arms.

DO DHEALRAMH

I gcuimhne ar Rita

Do dhealramh í do mháthair –
Guailí teanna ar an mbean bheag,
Do chrotsa í ag triall abhaile
Thar páirce
Tráthnóntaí samhraidh
Na hóige
Tar éis féar a bhaint,
Saothar na bhfear.

Fáiscim í is tú á chur sa chré.
Do chnámha féin atá im bhaclainn.

IF IS A VERY BIG WORD

For Joy Majekodunmi

We could go down to the river today,
Watch swollen water thunder over the weir,
Kick through piles of amber leaves –
No two were ever made the same,
Like snowflakes, you'd say,
And I'd smile.
No one in the world
Is as happy as we are today
And you'd wink at your reflection
In my eyes.

We'd do all this and more
If you were still alive.

DÁ dTITFEADH AN SPÉIR

Do Joy Majekodunmi

Rachaimis cois abhann inniu
Is an tuile ag búireach fan gcora,
Duilleoga ómra á scuabadh romhainn
Gan aon phéire mar a chéile,
Mar chalóga sneachta, déarfá-sa,
Aoibh an gháire ormsa.
Gan éinne ar domhan chomh sásta
Linne inniu,
Chaochfá súil le do scáth féin a bheadh
Le feiscint im shúile.

Sea dhéanfaimis an méid sin is tuilleadh
Ach tusa a bheith beo.

REVISIT

For Berni Brann

You look for news of births, marriages, deaths
In the face of every house
On the street where you once lived.
They speak of nothing but Celtic Tiger success.

You pass the home of a couple who have no family.
They gave half their garden for tennis courts,
So they could sit together on long summer evenings
And listen to the laughter of other people's children.

European Commission money has given the town
Roundabouts you never thought it needed,
Has paved green areas into a skateboarder's dream,
But left nowhere for the circus to pitch the Big Top.

That's the trouble with progress –
It doesn't know where to stop.

ATHCHUAIRT

Do Berni Brann

Ar shráid do dhúchais
Cuardaíonn tú scéalta beatha is báis
I ndreach na dtithe,
Ach seo teanntás do rug an Tíogar leis.

Anso lánúin gan chlann,
Leath an fhaiche ina chúirt leadóige,
Iad siúd ina n-aonar faoi scáth na gréine,
Clann na gcomharsan le spraoi is gáire.

Fuarthas maoiniú ón gCoimisiún Eorpach
Do thimpealláin, gan fáth dar leat,
Scátáil ar mire ar an bpábháil nua,
Gan láthair ann don Sorcas Mór.

Locht a fhaighim ar an ndul chun cinn –
Níl aon teora leis.

MEN

For the Browne family, for all their kindness

We can do nothing without the men,
Your mother used to say.
A woman who cut turf, saved hay
Beside the best of them.

She never heard of feminism
Though she lived it every day
And in a feminine corner of her heart
She knew we all need men –
No matter what we say.

NA FIR

Do mhuintir Browne

Ní féidir faic a dhéanamh gan na fir,
Adeireadh do mháthair.
Bean í do bhain féar is móin
I dteannta scoth na bhfear.

Bean í nár chuala trácht
Ar fheimineachas cé gur mhair sí tríd
Is i gcúinne baineann dá croí
Thuig sí go bhfuil na fir uainn –
Cuma cad deirtear fúthu.

JOHN

After they called
To tell me the news,
I took a shower
Dressed well
And went
To the polling station
To cast my vote.
You would have liked me
To do something useful.

I bought some groceries
On the way home
And a magazine
To distract me –
Got to be practical.
I cooked lunch,
Fed it to the birds.
I couldn't help
But remember your words:
No matter what happens,
You must go on.

I tried so hard
Not to think of you –
Not to feel,
I almost forgot
To breathe.
You would have been
So proud of me.
I only cried in my sleep.

JOHN

Ghlaodar orm
Drochscéal acu,
Folcadh go tapaidh
Ansan gléasta go péacach,
Ar aghaidh liom
Is chaitheas mo vóta.
Nár bhreá leatsa mé
I mbun gníomh fónta.

Cheannaíos bia
Ar an slí abhaile
Agus irisleabhar
Mar chaitheamh aimsire –
Bí praiticiúil.
Réitios lón
Do na héin.
Ní fhéadfainn gan chuimhneamh
Ar an méid adúraís:
Pé ní a tharlaíonn
Lean ort.

Tréaniarracht
Gan smaoineamh ort –
Bheith crua,
Ba bheag nár dhearmadas
Anáil a tharraingt.
Nach tú a bheadh bródúil.
Níor ghoileas ach trím shuan amháin.

HOPE

For Cian Warfield

I still think someday soon
Someone will say
They saw you in town,
Having coffee and reading
The great poets.

They will say of course you did not die.
Your death notice was a prank, a hoax,
Your funeral service and burial,
An impractical joke.

They will say you're looking well
And that your voice softened
As you spoke of me,
Sending your love and
Saying you will see me on Sunday –

And your eyes were full of Hope.

DÓCHAS

Do Cian Warfield

Sílim fós
Go ndéarfai liom
Go bhfacthas tusa ar an mbaile
Ag ol caifé, ag léamh
Na bhfilí móra.

Déarfai liom go maireann tú,
Nach raibh sa bhfógra báis ach cur i gcéill,
Mar mhagadh do bhí an sochraid
Is an adhlacadh.

Déarfai liom gur tú atá go breá,
An glór bog
Is m'ainm á lua
Le grá is ag rá
Go bhfeicfir Dé Domhnaigh mé –

Is do dhá shúil lán de Dhóchas.

SUNSET

I promised you
A hundred thousand sunsets
To keep you alive –
Make the sun rise for you
One more time.

You, being wiser,
Asked for sunsets
One by one,
Not knowing
The last one
Would be the last one.

Nothing's as final
As the setting sun.

Death broke my promise.
I haven't watched a sunset since.

Now I know the difference
Between a promise
And a wish.

LUÍ NA GRÉINE

Do gheallas duitse luí na gréine
Míle huair
Go mairfeá beo –
Is éirí gréine do gheallas
Uair amháin eile.

Agatsa a bhí an chiall,
D'iarr tú luí na gréine
Ceann ar cheann,
I nganfhiós duit do thioctadh
Ar an gcuma san
Luí an bháis.

Níl aon chríoch eile
Mar luí na gréine.

Bhris an Bás mo gheallúint.
Ní fhaca luí na gréine ó shin.

Anois is ea a thuigim
Nach ionann in aon chor
Geallúint is guí.

TELL ME

For Annette Majekodunmi

Tsunami, 9/11,
Wild forest fire,
A child drowned,
Parents who will
Never stop grieving.

Tell me, God All Mighty
Who can protect us
And heal us –
Do you actually prefer
Broken things,
Broken people?

INSINT

Do Annette Majekodunmi

Súnámaí, 9/11,
Tine sa bhforaois ar mire,
Leanbh báite,
Athair is máthair ag caoineadh
Go deo na ndeor.

Inis dom, a Dhia Uilechumhachtaigh
Cá bhfuil ár ndídean
Is ár slánú –
An fearr leat i ndáiríre
Rudaí scriosta,
Daoine scriosta?

NAMELESS

For the Hayes family

No one knows how difficult it was to keep you.
For five months, in that little bedsit,
With neighbours complaining every time you cried.
I felt you were crying for me,
Crying all those tears I could not shed
After he left us – your father.
We did love each other, you know.
Well, I loved him and I thought he loved me.
But that changed after you were born.
He became distant, cold.
He even asked me if I was sure you were his.
Then he left.
You were a month old.
I didn't have the energy to ask him to stay.
After that, when you woke up
In the middle of the night, crying,
I realised I was a very bad mother.
I tried even harder to take care of you.
But you just cried and cried.
Then I knew what I had to do.
I fed, washed and changed you.
I dressed you in your best clothes.
Then I left you on the hospital steps
Where I knew you would be found
Almost as soon as I walked away.
I knew you would be placed in a good home
With a mother and father who would never leave you.
That's not the way it sounded on the television news.
They said I abandoned you.
They asked me to come forward to be reunited with you.

They don't understand that I love you
And want to care for you.
I just can't.
They showed you on the evening news.
You looked so calm and content in the arms of a nurse.
You see, I knew you'd be happier without me,
So I couldn't go forward and claim you.
Then they named me.
They didn't mention your father.
They didn't ask him to come forward
To be reunited with you.
Like me,
They didn't name him.

GAN AINM

Do mhuintir Hayes

Is é Dia amhain a thuigeann an cruatan.
Cúig mhí sa tseoirín sin,
Cnaimhseáil na gcomharsan fútsa ag gol.
Tú ag gol mar gheall ormsa
Na deora nach raibh agam
Nuair a d'imigh sé – d'athairse.
Do cheapas féin tráth
Go raibh grá againn dá cheile.
É ag sleamhnú uaim, fuar.
D'fhiafraigh sé fiú arbh é d'athair i ndáiríre.
D'imigh sé
Is tú ar an saol le mí.
Ní raibh ionam impí air fanacht.
Tusa ag dúiseacht
I lár na hoíche ag gol
Bhraitheas gur mháthair mise
Gan dealramh
Ach dheineas dícheall.
Tusa ag gol, ag gol gan stad.
Bheathaíos tú, nigh is ghléas
Sa ghúna ab áille.
D'fhágas tú ag doras an ospidéil.
Bhí a fhios agam go dtiocfaí ort ansiúd
Gan mhoill ar bith,
Go mbeadh baile breá agatsa,
Athair is máthair agat go deo.
Ní mar sin do bhí sé ar an Nuacht
Dúradar gur thréigeas tú.
D'iarradar go bhfillfinn ort arís.
Ní thuigeann siad gur dheineas é seo
Le teann cúraim is grá.

Ní feidir liom.
Cuma breá socair ort ar an dtelefís
Go sona sásta ag an mbanaltra.
Bhí an ceart agam
Go mbeifeá níos fearr as gan mise.
Ní fhéadfainn filleadh.
Ghlaodar orm i m'ainm.
Níor luadar d'athair.
Níor ghlaodar air siúd.
Níor iarr éinne air filleadh.
Ar nós orm féin,
Níor ghlaodar ina ainm air.

TAKEN

You had your secret baby
A perfect blue-eyed boy
Ideal adoption material.

Your sister came to visit
You told her of the joy
Of having a son.

But the nuns wouldn't let her
See him
In case she found a way
To keep him
And he promised
To an ageing woman
And her even older husband
To help them in advancing years.

They turned away your sister
And when you were alone
The only child you ever had
Was taken to the strangers' home.

SCIOBADH

Leabh beag rúnda
Garsúinín na súl gorm
Oiriúnach le sciobadh.

Tháinig do dheirfiúr
Is chonaic do ríméad
Toisc mac agat.

Na mná rialta a chuir bac
Ar é a fheiscint
Ar eagla go gceapfadh sí
Slí éigin len é a choimeád
Is é geallta anois
Do bhean mheánaosta
Is dá fear níos críonna
Mar thaca don tseanaois.

Thugadar droim láimhe di,
Dod dheirfiúr
Is tusa id aonar, do leabh aonair
Á sciobadh ag strainséirí.

WAITING

For Peter and Catherine Dwyer

I hope she will like me.
I hope she's not a bag lady or a wino.
I couldn't deal with that.
I wonder if she's nervous too.
The seconds dawdle through the tension.
I feel small and scared,
Like I'm facing my first day at school.
I hope for so much from meeting her:
The answers to all my questions,
The answer to . . . a lot to ask of her.
Too much as it transpires.
But for now I wait under the town hall clock.

She said three o'clock.
What if she's late?
What if we don't recognise each other?
This could be a big mistake . . .

I hope she looks like me,
Jesus, someone somewhere has got to look like me.

Three o'clock chimes,
Startling me out of my feelings of hope and dread.
Time seems to freeze.
A lifetime of waiting has led me here.
A lifetime of hope and dread.
She can't be late and make me wait even longer,
That would be too cruel.

I'm bound to be disappointed –
My hopes are too high for the real world.
I expect a happy ending but this is no fairy tale.
This might be her . . .

She's tall and blonde like me.
Very good-looking,
Maybe too good-looking.
She walks past without a glance in my direction.

More waiting.
She's late now, if she's coming at all.
A whole minute passes.
An old, shabby woman steps out of the rushing crowd.
She touches my arm.
I freeze.
'Do you have any spare change?'
'Sure.'
I give her whatever coins I have.
She blends back into the crowd.
I wait.

Then I see her approaching.
She has my looks, or rather I have hers.
I know her,
She knows me,
She is not a bag lady or a wino,
But a well-dressed country lady with gold jewellery.

She reaches out to hug me – too close too soon.
We shake hands instead.
Skin to skin again.

Tears glitter in her eyes.
I fight back my own tears.
Our eyes meet.
Her hand in mine is small and cold.
She is not the mother I dreamed of.
She is a frightened, weeping, little old lady.

FANACHT

Do Peter and Catherine Dwyer

N'fheadar an mbeidh sí ceanúil orm.
Ní fhéadfainn é a sheasamh
Más bag lady nó wino í.
Ní fheadar an bhfuil faitíos uirthise leis.
Gach soicind chomh mall faoi theannas.
Táim beag faitíosach,
Mo chéad lá ar scoil déarfá.
Mo dhóchas chomh mór groí;
Ag lorg freagraí uaithi...
Mór an chuid é sin.
An iomarca, táim cinnte
Is mé ag fancht anso faoi chlog an bhaile.

Trí a chlog adúirt sí.
Ach ansin má bhíonn sí déanach?
Muna n-aithnímid a chéile?
Botún mór déanta b'fhéidir...

Tá súil le Dia agam
Go mbeidh sí dealraitheach liom – caithfidh sé a tharla.

Trí a chlog á bhualadh
A mhúsclaíonn as imeagla mé.
An t-am reoite.
Mo shaol ar fad do rug anso inniu mé.
Dóchas is uamhan na mblianta.
Ní fhéadfadh sí a bheith déanach,
Cruálach – bheadh an méid sin iomarcach.

Beidh díomá ormsa gan dabht –
Mé ro-dhócasach.
Ag súil le críoch shona ach ní scéal sí é seo.

Seans gurb í seo anois í...

Ard fionn ar mo nós fhéin.
Dathúil,
Ro-dhathúil b'fhéidir.
Siúlann thart gan fhéachaint.

Fanacht arís.
Í deanach anois, má thagann sí.
Nóiméad amháin eile.
Tagann seanbhean ghiobach
Is leagann lámh orm.

Mise i mo staic.
'An bhfuil aon airgead beag agat?'
'Cinnté'.
Tugaim di cupla bonn.
Ar ais léi siúd i lár an tslua.
Fanacht.

Ansan is ea a chím í siúd.
Í cosúil liom, nó mise cosúil léi.
Aithním í,
Aithníonn sí mise,
Ní haon baglady í ná wino,
Ach í néata gléasta seodmhar.

Síneann chun barróige – ach ró-luath.
Lámh a chroitheadh.
Craiceann a chuimilt arís.

Deora ag drithliú uaithi.
Mise ar tí goil.
Buaileann súile.
Greim agam ar a láimhín bídeach fuar.
Ní hí seo an mháthair a bhí im aigne.
Seanbhean í seo atá ag gol le heagla.

BUCHAREST

For Eileen Dwyer and David Little

City trees with dusty leaves
Guard ageing boulevards.

Evening sunshine gilds
The faces of dark-eyed
Men and women
As they rush home in noisy traffic.

And later, memories
Of marble mansions
Will haunt me
With their beauty
And grandeur
And strange grace.

Wisps of the past
Whirl through my mind –
A young lady nervous
In her first ball gown
As a gentleman officer
Asks her to dance.
Older ladies whispering
Behind their fans,
As a long dead orchestra
Plays the last waltz
For the last time.

And the music lingers on
In this golden evening
And the traffic's song.

BUCHAREST

Do Eileen Dwyer agus David Little

Deannach ar chrainn na cathrach
Gardaí na seanboulevards.

Grian um nóin ag lonradh
I ndreach na ndaoine
Donnshúileacha
A ritheann trí ghleo na tráchta abhaile.

Ar ball, cuimhní
Mar thaibhsí
Na dtithe marmair
Iad go hálainn maorga
Lán de ghradam
Is grásta aduain.

Blúiríní na laethe a bhí
Ag guairneáil trím intinn –
Bean chúthaileach óg
Sa chéad ghúna damhsa,
Iarrann an t-oifigeach
Rince uirthi.
Seanmhná ag cogarnach
Laistiar den bhfean acu,
An váls deireanach
Don uair dheireanach
Ón mbanna a d'éag fadó.

An ceol ag moilliú
Tráthnóna órga
Faoi chrónán na tráchta.

EARTH MOTHER

For Firoana

The plains of Romania
Under thirty degrees of heat
Stretch to the poplar trees
At the edge of the earth.

A weathered peasant lady
Offers me water,
Her toothless smile
Mothers me
As I rest in the shade.

She is a daughter of this soil,
Of sun and sweat and toil.
I am from a city
She will never visit.

As I return her smile
And sip her water
She is every woman's mother,
I am every woman's daughter.

MÁTHAIR CHRÉAFÓIGE

Do Firoana

Machairí na Rómáine
I mbrothall an lae
Síneann go poibleoga bhána
Ar imeall an domhain.

Bean chríonna tuaithe
A thairgeann deoch dom,
Miongháire mantach
Dom mhúirniú
Istigh faoin bhfothain.

Iníon chréafóige í,
Iníon allais is gréine.
Ón gcathair nach bhfeicfir choíche
Is ea do thángas.

Aoibh ormsa leis
Ag ól uisce,
Iníon cách mise,
Máthair cách í siúd.

EVENTUALLY

For Kathleen and Vincent Warfield

Lady Danube wears
A silken shawl
Flowing from her shoulders,
Woven from threads
Of cities she has cleaned,
Forests she has fed.
Reflections of ancient
Roman soldiers
Flicker in her eyes.
She was present at the birth of empires,
And turned away as they died.
She buried the bodies
And washed off the blood.

She has secrets no one would
Want to know, she keeps them
Safe within her soul.

Like a lonely tourist
Exploring Europe,
Eventually she finds her way home.

AR DEIREADH THIAR

Do Kathleen agus Vincent Warfield

Spéirbhean í an Danóib
Seál den síoda
Ina slaoda dá guaillí,
Snátha fite
Ós na cathracha do rug sí léi
Á nglanadh, ós na coillte sásta.
Ina súile fós
Preabann scáth na Róimhe
Is a cuid saighdiúirí.
B'ann di nuair a saolaíodh
Impireachtaí
Is b'ann di nuair a d'éag.
Chuir sí na corpáin
Is scuab sí léi rian fola.

N'fheadar éinne na rúin
Atá aici siúd faoi ghlas
Ina hanam istigh.

Aonarán í ag scaoileadh fan Eoraip,
Tagann ar an gcúrsa abhaile
Ar deireadh thiar.



HELEN SORAGHAN DWYER

Helen Soraghan Dwyer has been chairperson of the Irish Writers' Union since March 2008, and has served on the executive committee of the Union since 2000. She has also been a member of the Board of the Irish Copyright Licensing Agency since May 2007. She has been a member of Irish Pen for many years, and also a member of the Board of the Irish Writers' Centre for four years from 2002-2006.

Helen was recently appointed a director on the board of Dublin South FM Community Radio Station. She produces and presents a weekly radio arts programme, Rhyme & Reason, for Dublin South FM. She was a founder member of a writers' group based in south Dublin.

Her poetry and prose have been published in Ireland and England, and have won awards in both countries. She has read her work on local radio and it has also been broadcast on national radio. Helen has read her poetry in theatres in Dublin during poetry festivals. She also read at the Festival of Days and Nights of Literature in Romania, where her work was anthologised and translated into several languages. Her poetry was broadcast on Romanian radio and television and filmed for Norwegian television. A collection of her poetry will be published in Romania in June 2011.

She has read at the Kritya International Poetry Festival 2010 at Mysore, India, where her work was translated into Hindi and Kannada. She also read at several schools and colleges and at Mysore University. Currently, she is completing a novel, a coming-of-age story set in Dublin and Italy.

HELEN SORAGHAN DWYER

Ball den Choiste Feidhmiúcháin de chuid Comhar na Scríbhneoirí ón mbliain 2000 is ea Helen Soraghan Dwyer agus í anois ina cathaoirleach orthu ó Mhárta 2008 i leith. Ó Bhealtaine 2007 tá sí ar bhord an Irish Copyright Licensing Agency. Ball í freisin den chumann Irish Pen le blianta agus í ar bhord Áras na Scríbhneoirí idir 2002-2006.

Le déanaí ceapadh Helen mar stiúrthóir ar bhord an Stáisiún Raidió Pobail Dublin South FM mar a mbíonn clár aici uair sa tseachtain, Rhyme & Reason, a bhaineann le cúlraí ealaíon. Bhí sí ar bhunaitheoirí grúpa scríbhneoirí atá lonnaithe i ndeisceart Bhaile Átha Cliath.

Tá duaiseanna buaite ag Helen ar son próis agus filíochta araon agus foilsíodh saothar léi sa tír seo agus i Sasana. Is minic í ag léamh ar chláracha raidió idir áitiúla agus náisiúnta agus le linn féiltí filíochta i mBaile Átha Cliath. Bhí sí le cloisint freisin le linn an Festival of Days and Nights of Literature sa Rómáin mar a ndearnadh aistriúcháin dá cuid saothair do chnuasaigh i dteangacha éagsúla. Craoladh filíocht léi ar na meáin sa tír sin agus bhí scannán fúithi ar theilifís san Iorua. Tá sé i gceist cnuasach filíochta léi a fhoilsiú sa Rómáin Meitheamh 2011.

I Mysore na hIndia léigh sí mar chuid den Kritya International Poetry Festival 2010, i mórán scoileanna, coláistí agus in Ollscoil Mysore. Tá aistriúcháin déanta go Hindí agus go Kannada. Faoi láthair tá úrscéal idir lámha aici a bhaineann le teacht in inmhe agus é suite i mBaile Átha Cliath agus san Iodáil.