

FEATURED POET**DAVID McLOGHLIN—Six Poems**

David McLoghlin received an Arts Council's Bursary in 2006. His work has appeared in *Poetry Ireland Review*, *The Stinging Fly*, *Cyphers*, *Southword*, *The Blue Canary*, *Studies* and *The Stony Thursday Book*. In 2008, he participated in Poetry Ireland's Introductions readings series, and was awarded second prize in The Patrick Kavanagh Awards.



Lawrence, KS (5 p.m. Tuesday, 4th November, 2008)

for Sorcha Hyland

While you're in the kitchen with Osiris,
 Melissa—long black-haired, and slightly in earnest
 —crosses the street with Eve, her two year old,
 to ask the lend of a bike to go and vote
 here, the only blue county in Kansas.
 Eve explores red leaves under the porch swing,
 listens to Indian Summer crickets
 as I ask Jeremy about the flag's absence.

He carries it up from the basement, tied
 on a wooden pole tipped by a bronze eagle.
 And, as he hoists it, he says, '*Old Glory*'
 —that Kansan touch in his inflection:
 the way, here, they still say 'Missoura'—
 and watches as it begins to flap in a new wind.

Dancer (Flamenco)

Out of stillness, a gesture.
A hand, strong wrist;
fingers spinning air.
Then: passes, feints, preliminaries
—like the wing-struts of a learning bird—
begin to build.

Calmly, the *cantaor* drops one word, 'Now,'
into the kerosene silence,
and suddenly the world is thick with eyes:
a hundred hissing jets of black flame.
It is the dead, keeping vigil.
Their dancer is about to make the journey.

At the front of the stage
he straightens like a cobra—or a victim,
transfixed by the event horizon,
looking for a way to begin.
A way to cross the divide.

And behind him goes the *jaleo*:
now soft, now insistent; understanding,
cruel-to-be-kind:
'Si, eso; si. Eso si. Vamos ya.
Ahora.'

The spiral rises another level.
And he rises to it, rapt, finally forgetting,
blind before the door
where there was no door before.
And in the air there is a veil of sweat
like the sweat on the veil of Veronica.

THE STINGING FLY

'A Forest'

When I was sixteen, it was my favourite song.
But as I listened, I didn't know
that I, too, was lost in a forest.
For years, the trees had multiplied:
A hundred miles and no perspective
spun from the fingers of a witch.
The witch was a man, the man was a priest;
and the spell began as words: seeds,
dropped casually, precisely, into prepared ground.
Then, from an invasive rhizome
a taproot that extended underground,
the forest grew, snagging so thickly
it allowed only a mile of circular movement a day:
horrifying by later implication.

The fairy tale of the spell that sleeps the world
is true: the castle where even the flies sleep,
where the cook about to beat the apprentice sleeps;
my life slept, my will slept, and the forest grew.
He shrank me, so that I became small:
so small, I was mitochondrion,
energy for someone else's self.
The forest took my youth
and sometimes it wants the adult too.

Now that I am out in the open,
like a person walking away from a crash
I trust in distance, and keep going:
glad to have survived into the sunlight
that holds no forest within.
But on certain nights
when I wake from dreams,
I look back and see it has grown on the horizon.
I still see the darkness during the day
and feel the scream returning, muffled
deep in the place no one can hear.
Then I turn, and walk on.
All I trust is what belongs
to the forward horizon.

David McLoghlin

Unrhymed Sonnet

*If a child asked for an egg,
would you give him a scorpion?—from Luke 11:12*

He was in my dream last night. I won't say *again*.
It has been some time. But enough to say,
last night he was in my dream, to any of four friends
and they know how it eclipses the days.

He was there in the dream: silent, posturing,
obscene, making me lie. Like a bramble
he spread speculative feelers into my life
and waited, patient, invisible in plain sight.

But follow it down the years, down twenty years,
all the way to the root. Then tell the loves I lost
(their gentle voices shake me out of bad dreams),
tell them why I needed sanctuary

at twenty-nine. Explain why I woke afraid.
But not off course, now. Not ever again.

David McLoghlin

THE STINGING FLY

Cuas a' Bhodaigh

Not many find their way here.
After the islands, riding luminous
and unreachable in the Sound,
and the Three Sisters, dreaming,
this is the end of the road.

But as you drove here
through the sedge grass
and reeds of Feothanach
—croí na teanga—
you were preparing yourself for Cuas:

shedding other landscapes
for the simplicity of the bridge
over a stream
that runs into the sea
at the end of a world

the cobbled slipway,
a few boats bobbing in the natural harbour
—just a gash in black cliffs,
afterthoughts of Mount Brandon—
the frightening simplicity that says

the road ends here.
If you want to continue,
either navigate or climb.
There is nowhere else to go.
A breeze ripples the water

as if Brendan had just left harbour.
And you walk back from the pier
the way you would after seeing off a friend,
back to the only life you have
hesitant, but resolved.

David McLoughlin

Beginning of Trust

I've forgotten for how long now
I have fallen asleep
knowing you'll be there tomorrow.
It influences even the way I breathe
and rest into dreams.

And I'm here,
listening to you breathe beside me
in the night light:
I'm here, looking at you,
amazed at your trust
in sleep, in love, in me.

I want to wake you
and tell you what has happened.

David McLoughlin