

**July 2023**

*The Falling of the Leaves*

**W. B. Yeats**

**Autumn is over the long leaves that love us,  
And over the mice in the barley sheaves;  
Yellow the leaves of the rowan above us,  
And yellow the wet wild-strawberry leaves.**

**The hour of the waning of love has beset us,  
And weary and worn are our sad souls now;  
Let us part, ere the season of passion forget us,  
With a kiss and a tear on thy drooping brow.**

## After Surgery

By Thomas McCarthy

As I was saying, before the news became  
Really bad, as I was saying, we hardly know  
What it is to breathe. Whether it is being  
Distracted or being in a constant state of  
Fear, we forget the immense gratitude  
That our lungs still function. Or maybe by  
Breath I mean something more than air,  
More how a feeling of separation vanishes  
When we exercise awareness rather than  
Self-torture. It is the proper function of  
Poets to make us want to breathe. Love makes  
Long words out of the simplest emotion –  
We weave in its backdrafts and elongations,  
We twist and turn, we live and we grasp.  
I remember in Mercy hospital the young  
Croatian anaesthetist saying gently as  
She pulled on a tube "I think you can breathe  
On your own now, you are doing so well."  
The annoyance of being cut adrift! But my  
Lungs pulled away from the shore on their  
Own, my lungs pulled and pulled on what  
Was needed for breath. The surgical ward  
Fell away in its own Vipassana meditation,  
Its ego was eradicated and a sort of mind  
That was like a mind of mindfulness just  
Filled the whole room and a companionship  
Like the companionship of Buddha and his  
Holy disciples carried me back to my own life,  
Away from an inert physics and medicine;  
Back, back to what is personal and full of blood.  
The Buddha was a troublemaker in his own  
Time but he never caved in at a cancer ward, or  
Succumbed to the epidural or to any horror

Of laziness or distracted mind. My true breath  
Is this feeling of having just arrived, of sturdy  
Essences, of breath going on by going through.  
And yet this really bad news, can it be true,  
Of Leonard Cohen's death in a faraway place,  
Has made me think of breath again, of love's  
Survival, of Suzanne and Marianne, of Leonard  
Sleeping in Yeats' bedroom at Lissadell. They say  
He slept alone, with only bats stirring in the alcoves  
Of an Irish night. Such news has been bad lately, but  
We must fight the empty void, the out of breath.

## **Hard on Shoes**

**By Martina Evans**

Mammy examined my run down heels, said  
I was hard on shoes and it was true, I threw  
myself hard into everything. My Biro indented  
the page. My eraser rubbed holes in my copybook  
the page lit up by the Master's absinthe eye  
staring through at me before he ran for the stick.  
My books too – squeezed, flattened, pawed with butter,  
dripped with cocoa, pushed into pockets and once  
between the covers of a missal when I hoped to get away  
with reading Enid Blyton in Mass. *Animal Farm*  
left after the picnic at the Mass Rock, drenched  
by rain, ruffled by the wind, swollen like my feet  
inside the oven of the kitchen range in Burnfort.  
I didn't notice my shoes burning, turning the pages.

## Hippy Get a Job

By Sarah Clancy

You might not realise your predictability  
but when you caught my eye on Shop Street, at the demo,  
I could see the thoughtless words forming in your brain  
so before you shout them at me pass-remarkably  
let me just stop you there for once, and in the gap between  
now and when those words make it from your mouth  
into the air between us, let me tell you something;  
because I have wrestled with a pitchfork the same size as I was  
and shovelled unknown tons of horse manure from sheds  
before your mother brought you breakfast toast and tea  
on school mornings before your leaving cert.

And when you daydreamed out the window of maths class  
from an overheated room into the driving rain  
I was lifting bales of sodden hay through the mud and bitter wind  
to the bottom field where the old cow died in spring  
and because I had small hands I woke a hundred early mornings  
to turn unborn lambs around inside their mothers. While you were  
filling college application forms and when you were accepted,  
bringing weekend washing home on student discount busses  
I was pitting my eight stone against half a ton of pulling racehorse  
and couldn't feel my fingers or open my eyes with the rushing wind

You then, qualified and interviewing in your shirt and tie and nerves,  
while I was taking sweating tourists on foot through humid rainforests  
carrying longhouse chief's heavy gifts of pineapples nine hours back to  
base  
in a country you don't have the breath of mind to even imagine,  
and nearer home when you guffawed into your pint glass and refused to  
leave  
Taylor's bar on Sunday early closings I washed your glass, swept the  
floor  
and woke before the county to spend frozen hours putting  
rubber bands on live lobster claws in a concrete tank in Bearna

And then I bet you were promoted for your clever corporate antics,  
while I did three years mortgage-paying on the night shift  
with bleary day time TV addicts and stoners manufacturing,  
things you might one day have inserted after too many business lunches  
then later on when I decided I needed education and you sat,  
with popcorn consuming the latest Hollywood blockbuster  
you couldn't see me upstairs splicing your next bit of entertainment.  
You have no idea how long a day is invigilating young accountants  
in tedium and silence in dusty exam halls with the smell of fast food fat  
still clinging to my clothes from my night time cash in hand gig.

You won't realise that I have the streets of Galway imprinted on my brain  
from delivering pesto and goats cheese pizza to your Knocknacarra sofa  
or that I'm an expert on late night radio, and all night petrol stations;  
secondary benefits of an un-free education, and now and here,  
when I've finally got myself some work I think has merit, and  
I chose to use this day off, working to defend the rights of others  
don't be surprised at all at how quickly I abandon my principles of  
non-violence  
and use this placard on you, as a weapon, if you say what you are  
thinking.

**Berry**      **By Jessica Traynor**

My grandmother looked down  
on women who called them berries —  
threw strained upward glances  
as we scoured the shops for one  
the day my granddad died.

A funeral without a hat?!  
In her mind all ninety years of her  
were still wrapped  
in that slender body  
from the photo on Howth head;

A spill of curls falling  
from the beret she wore  
at just the right angle,  
that made the hat  
speak volumes,

suggesting, as it did,  
one raised eyebrow.  
And in the orange light  
of the haberdashers,  
she pronounced the word

as if holding a single snowflake  
in her mouth: A ber- et,  
do you have a ber- et,  
while the shopkeeper rifled  
through a sale-item basket,

until, miraculously, it appeared:  
cashmere, fledgling-soft  
to perch on her white hair  
like some dark protecting bird —  
there's your berry.

And on this day, she allows  
the slip to go unmentioned  
as we fuss about her,  
and another language  
that once sounded falls silent.

## **All the Horses She's Ever Loved**

**by Jane Clarke**

**gather round my mother's bed –  
Bess from Abergavenny would leap any fence  
for the company of cows; Fred would let himself**

**out of the stable and lift his headcollar off the peg;  
Rory stomped into the kitchen one evening  
and devoured a loaf of oven-warm bread.**

**Only yesterday she and her sisters  
were in the trap on the way to school  
with the pony that yearned to race the train.**

**He galloped the long bog road  
from Ballymoe and not even her father,  
holding the reins, could slow him.**

**Now Sunday morning, she's with her brother  
in the haggard pitching hay from a rick;  
before the church bell rings in the village**

**the cattle must be fed. They build the load,  
tie it with ropes and heel up the shafts  
to back in the Clydesdale by the bridle.**

**At first she frets about steering Jack  
as he pulls the cart, swaying up the narrow lane  
and through the gateway,**

**But horses have more gumption  
than any of us, she says.**

## Ceres By Molly Twomey

---

### Ceres

I was sixteen when I felt you kick, tried hangers,  
scalding water, the spoke of a bicycle wheel.

You shrieked, howled, wept in that tooth-marked  
cot with mould like a claw. I told mothers

at the playground I was a sitter, postmen  
that my husband would be back later.

At dusk, I'd play the video of your birth  
in reverse, blood and afterbirth filling me back up.

Once, I left you on the steps of the church,  
ran back three minutes later, convinced

there were bruises like berries squished  
under your skin. I wanted some physical thing


to hate myself for. At twelve, you pierced  
your navel with a safety pin. My fingers itched

to wring your throat but wiped that seed of blood.  
Now, as I gut your room for drugs, I find job specs, CVs,

a photo on your dresser of us on the swings,  
me pushing you away and pulling you back in.



## VIDEO

 The truth about humans and animals. Building the Ark, a poetry fil...

## NOTE!

I contacted Pat Boran and he holds the copyright. He is delighted for us to use his poetry film and gives us full permission which I have in writing!