

The Lake Isle of Innisfree
BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

For the Traveler
Author
John O'Donohue

Every time you leave home,
Another road takes you
Into a world you were never in.

New strangers on other paths await.
New places that have never seen you
Will startle a little at your entry.
Old places that know you well
Will pretend nothing
Changed since your last visit.

When you travel, you find yourself
Alone in a different way,
More attentive now
To the self you bring along,
Your more subtle eye watching
You abroad; and how what meets you
Touches that part of the heart
That lies low at home:

How you unexpectedly attune
To the timbre in some voice,
Opening in conversation
You want to take in
To where your longing

Has pressed hard enough
Inward, on some unsaid dark,
To create a crystal of insight
You could not have known
You needed
To illuminate
Your way.

When you travel,
A new silence
Goes with you,
And if you listen,
You will hear
What your heart would
Love to say.

A journey can become a sacred thing:
Make sure, before you go,
To take the time
To bless your going forth,
To free your heart of ballast
So that the compass of your soul
Might direct you toward
The territories of spirit
Where you will discover
More of your hidden life,
And the urgencies
That deserve to claim you.

May you travel in an awakened way,
Gathered wisely into your inner ground;
That you may not waste the invitations
Which wait along the way to transform you.

May you travel safely, arrive refreshed,
And live your time away to its fullest;
Return home more enriched, and free
To balance the gift of days which call you.

~ John O'Donohue ~

Blue Saxophones
BY MOYA CANNON

In Buenos Aires the sidewalks are broken,
but the trees are tall and blue,
blue like Cézanne's blue pitcher,
which speaks to some still corner of the soul –
a quite unnecessary, delicate blue –
and the unmended pavements are strewn
with a carpet of blue blossoms,
and with the bent pennies,
the tough leathery purses,
which are the seed cases of the Jacaranda –
a surety, until now,
that there would certainly
be more and more of this,
more tall blue trees in October,
singing, gratuitously,
above the dusty pavements
out of thousands of blue,
clustered saxophones.

Hands
By Moya Cannon

for Eamonn and Kathleen

It was somewhere over the north-eastern coast of Brazil,
over Fortaleza, a city of which I know nothing,
except that it is full of people —
the life of each one a mystery
greater than the Amazon —
it was there, as the toy plane on the flight monitor
nudged over the equator
and veered east towards Marrakech,
that I started to think again of hands,
of how strange it is that our lives —
the life of the red-haired French girl to my left,
the life of the Argentinian boy to my right,
my life, and the lives of all the dozing passengers,
who are being carried fast in the dark
over the darkened Atlantic —
all of these lives are now being held
in the hands of the pilot,
in the consciousness of the pilot,
and I think of other hands which can hold our lives,

the hands of the surgeon
whom I will meet again when I return home,
the hands of the black-haired nurse
who unwound the birth-cord from my neck,
the soft hands of my mother,
the hands of those others
who have loved me,
until it seems almost
as though this is what a human life is:
to be passed from hand to hand,
to be borne up, improbably, over an ocean.

Going Home to Mayo, Winter, 1949 (a poem by Paul Durcan)

Leaving behind us the alien, foreign city of Dublin
My father drove us through the night in an old Ford Anglia,
His five-year-old son in the seat beside him,
The rexine seat of red leatherette,
And a yellow moon peered in through the windscreen.
'Daddy, Daddy,' I cried, 'Pass out the moon,'
But no matter how hard he drove he could not pass out the moon.
Each town we passed through was another milestone
And their names were magic passwords into eternity:
Kilcock, Kinnegad, Strokestown, Elphin,
Tarmonbarry, Tulsk, Ballaghedereen, Ballyvarry;
Now we were in Mayo and the next stop was Turlough,
The village of Turlough in the heartland of Mayo,
And my father's mother's house, all oil-lamps and women,
And my bedroom over the public bar below,
And in the morning cattle-cries and cock-crows:
Life's seemingly seamless garment gorgeously rent
By their screeches and bellowings. And in the evenings
I walked with my father in the high grass down by the river
Talking with him – an unheard-of thing in the city.

But home was not home and the moon could be no more outflanked
Than the daylight nightmare of Dublin city:
Back down along the canal we chugged into the city
And each lock-gate tolled our mutual doom;
And railings and palings and asphalt and traffic lights,
And blocks after blocks of so-called 'new' tenements –
Thousands of crosses of loneliness planted
In the narrowing grave of the life of the father;
In the wide, wide cemetery of the boy's childhood

All Legendary Obstacles
by John Montague

All legendary obstacles lay between
Us, the long imaginary plain,
The monstrous ruck of mountains
And, swinging across the night,
Flooding the Sacramento, San Joaquin,
The hissing drift of winter rain.

All day I waited, shifting
Nervously from station to bar
As I saw another train sail
By, the San Francisco Chief or
Golden Gate, water dripping
From great flanged wheels.

At midnight you came, pale
Above the negro porter's lamp.
I was too blind with rain
And doubt to speak, but
Reached from the platform
Until our chilled hands met.

You had been traveling for days
With an old lady, who marked
A neat circle on the glass
With her glove, to watch us
Move into the wet darkness
Kissing, still unable to speak.

The Lost Land
BY EAVAN BOLAND
I have two daughters.

They are all I ever wanted from the earth.
Or almost all.
I also wanted one piece of ground:

One city trapped by hills. One urban river.
An island in its element.
So I could say mine. My own.
And mean it.

Now they are grown up and far away
and memory itself
has become an emigrant,
wandering in a place
where love disassembles itself as landscape:

Where the hills
are the colours of a child's eyes,
where my children are distances, horizons:

At night,
on the edge of sleep,

I can see the shore of Dublin Bay.
Its rocky sweep and its granite pier.

Is this, I say
how they must have seen it,
backing out on the mailboat at twilight,

shadows falling
on everything they had to leave?
And would love forever?
And then

I imagine myself
at the landward rail of that boat
searching for the last sight of a hand.

I see myself
on the underworld side of that water,
the darkness coming in fast, saying
all the names I know for a lost land:

Ireland. Absence. Daughter.

Take Care – Michael D Higgins

In the journey to the light,
the dark moments
should not threaten.


Belief
requires
that you hold steady.

Bend, if you will,
with the wind.

The tree is your teacher,
roots at once
more firm
from experience
in the soil
made fragile.

Your gentle dew will come
and a stirring
of power
to go on
towards the space
of sharing.

In the misery of the I,
in rage,
it is easy to cry out
against all others
but to weaken
is to die
in the misery of knowing
the journey abandoned
towards the sharing
of all human hope
and cries
is the loss
of all we know
of the divine
reclaimed
for our shared
humanity.
Hold firm.
Take care.
Come home
together.

 Journey's End-Makem & Clancy 10/10