

I Am of Ireland by William Butler Yeats

*'I am of Ireland,
And the Holy Land of Ireland,
And time runs on,' cried she.
'Come out of charity,
Come dance with me in Ireland.'*

One man, one man alone
In that outlandish gear,
One solitary man
Of all that rambled there
Had turned his stately head.
That is a long way off,
And time runs on,' he said,
'And the night grows rough.'

*'I am of Ireland,
And the Holy Land of Ireland,
And time runs on,' cried she.
'Come out of charity
And dance with me in Ireland.'*

'The fiddlers are all thumbs,
Or the fiddle-string accursed,
The drums and the kettledrums
And the trumpets all are burst,
And the trombone,' cried he,
'The trumpet and trombone,'
And cocked a malicious eye,
'But time runs on, runs on.'

*I am of Ireland,
And the Holy Land of Ireland,
And time runs on,' cried she.
"Come out of charity
And dance with me in Ireland.'*

Colmcille on Exile

by Paul Muldoon

from Irish circa 1,000 C.E.

It would be such a blast, O Son of God,
to be able to scud
across the heavy seas
to Ireland, to go back to the exquisite

Plain of Eolarg, back to Benevenagh,
to go back across the Foyle
and listen to the swans
singing at full

tilt as my boat, the Dew-Red,
puts in to port,
with the very seagulls coming out
for a ticker tape parade.

I sigh constantly to be in Ireland,
where I still had some authority,
rather than living among foreigners,
dejected, dog-tired.

A pity, O King of Mysteries,
I was ever forced off my home turf,
a pity I ever got caught up
in the Battle of Cul Dreimhne.

Isn't it well for Cormac of Durrow
to be back there in his cell
listening to the self-same sounds
that once lifted up my soul,

the wind in the elm tree
getting us into the swing,
the blackbird's droll lamentation
as it claps its wings,

the early morning belling
of a herd of big bucks,
the music of summer edging through woodland
from the cuckoos' beaks...

The three things I left behind
I liked best on earth
were Durrow, Derry of the heavenly choirs,
and Gartan, my place of birth.

I so loved being in Ireland
and still rail against being displaced.
To hang with Comgall in Bangor, Canice in Kilkenny,
it would be such a blast.

Stony Grey Soil by Patrick Kavanagh

O stony grey soil of Monaghan
The laugh from my love you thieved;
You took the gay child of my passion
And gave me your clod-conceived.

You clogged the feet of my boyhood
And I believed that my stumble
Had the poise and stride of Apollo
And his voice my thick tongued mumble.
You told me the plough was immortal!
O green-life conquering plough!
The mandril stained, your coulter blunted
In the smooth lea-field of my brow.

You sang on steaming dunghills
A song of cowards' brood,
You perfumed my clothes with weasel itch,
You fed me on swinish food

You flung a ditch on my vision
Of beauty, love and truth.
O stony grey soil of Monaghan
You burgled my bank of youth!

Lost the long hours of pleasure
All the women that love young men.
O can I still stroke the monster's back
Or write with unpoisoned pen.

His name in these lonely verses
Or mention the dark fields where
The first gay flight of my lyric
Got caught in a peasant's prayer.

Mullahinsa, Drummeril, Black Shanco-
Wherever I turn I see
In the stony grey soil of Monaghan
Dead loves that were born for me

Any Woman by Katherine Tynan

I am the pillars of the house;
The keystone of the arch am I.
Take me away, and roof and wall
Would fall to ruin me utterly.

I am the fire upon the hearth,
I am the light of the good sun,
I am the heat that warms the earth,
Which else were colder than a stone.

At me the children warm their hands;
I am their light of love alive.
Without me cold the hearthstone stands,
Nor could the precious children thrive.

I am the twist that holds together
The children in its sacred ring,
Their knot of love, from whose close tether
No lost child goes a-wandering.

I am the house from floor to roof,
I deck the walls, the board I spread;
I spin the curtains, warp and woof,
And shake the down to be their bed.

I am their wall against all danger,
Their door against the wind and snow,
Thou Whom a woman laid in a manger,
Take me not till the children grow!

Mother Ireland

By Eavan Boland

At first

I was land.

I lay on my back to be fields
and when I turned
on my side

I was a hill
under freezing stars.

I did not see.

I was seen.

Night and day

words fell on me.

Seeds. Raindrops.

Chips of frost.

From one of them

I learned my name.

I rose up. I remembered it.

Now I could tell my story.

It was different

from the story told about me.

And now also

It was spring.

I could see the wound I had left
in the land by leaving it.

I travelled west.

Once there

I looked with so much love

at every field

as it unfolded

its rusted wheel and its pram chassis

and at the gorse-

bright distances

I had been

that they misunderstood me.

Come back to us

they said

Trust me I whispered.

Six Ways to Wash Your Hands (Ayliffe 1978)

ANNEMARIE NÍ CHURREÁIN
for the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation

1

Wet hands, apply soap and rub palm to palm until a white lather forms like the spit and rage of women, who, having lain among waves, were dragged back up again by the hair and stripped of their names to pay for the wrongs in their bellies, as they stitched lace, pressed linen sheets, and each week bowed their heads to the post-partum girls all lined up at the font like a row of roots half-pulled out of the earth and still holding on to their young.

2

Rub right palm over left dorsum and left palm over right dorsum to ensure the scent of infant leaves your skin: the sour fumes of bottled milk, triangled terry cloth, ice-cold smears of cream. The scent of sin can cling for years as potent as a bad dream of trade-deals, needle pricks, poppies bloomed on the skull. The scent of a child in an unmarked grave may get in beneath your fingernails and cause all sorts of problems in later life.

3

Rub palm to palm, fingers interlaced and around the wrists to erase all trace of fathers. Never mention cuffs. Never mention scars. Raise your head against the sky and let the violet clouds overfill your eyes as the names of these men become again unknown as birds. When you see a wing, like a realm of thumbed pages fluttering, take this as a sign: the fathers are no more.

4

Rub backs of fingers to opposing palm with fingers interlocked and loosen the joints of wards, nurseries, bolted pantries stocked with canisters of warm milk and cheese sold by the yellow quart as the imagined cream of it dripped from the mouths of hungry, swollen girls. Rub out the halls, statues, sills. Leave only a rusted nail in a cemetery wall.

5

Rotational rubbing of right thumb clasped in left palm and vice versa to disimprint the memory of files. Wash clean the data until days, months, years signed by clammy hands run like slip-streams into a great shaking lake. This means

that even should your lips part to release a holy word
all that will spill out is a wet pulp no one understands.

6

Rotational rubbing backwards and forwards with clasped fingers
of right hand in left palm and vice versa to wear thin the heart-lines.

Be a sister and repeat the law like a hymn into the sink.

Do not commemorate: Do not remunerate. Do not let
the wounded woman or her child speak in a bare tongue.

Wash in this way and rid your hands of Mother, Baby, Home.

From *The Cure at Troy*

By Seamus Heaney

Human beings suffer,
They torture one another,
They get hurt and get hard.
No poem or play or song
Can fully right a wrong
Inflicted and endured

...

History says, don't hope
On this side of the grave.
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up,
And hope and history rhyme.

So hope for a great sea-change
On the far side of revenge.
Believe that further shore
Is reachable from here.
Believe in miracle
And cures and healing wells.

Call miracle self-healing:
The utter, self-revealing
Double-take of feeling.
If there's fire on the mountain
Or lightning and storm
And a god speaks from the sky

That means someone is hearing
The outcry and the birth-cry
of new life at its term.

Video from Dept of Foreign Affairs

[O Danny Boy](#)

