

The Homecoming

John F McCullagh

His wife, George, was present with flowers.
Anne and Michael, his children, were there.
A headstone had been carved at the Quarry,
now all waited on Yeats to appear.

Soft and damp was that day in the graveyard
with the scent of turned earth in the air.
Beyond rose the bulk of Ben Bulbin,
As the Lorry, with the poet, drew near.

Ten years he had slept in his coffin,
while the great nation states played at war.
Now Sean MacBride, the son of his rival,
brought him home, where he'd not been before.

At his birth, Yeats was a British subject.
By his death, a Dominion was here.
Now they laid him to rest in the free state;
the newly minted Republic of Eire.

The County of Mayo

By Tomás O Flannghaile

On the deck of Patrick Lynch's boat I sat in deep despair.
With the crying of the weary night and the weeping of the day;
Were it not that full of sorrow from my people forth I go,
By the blessed sun tis royally I'd sing thy praises sweet Mayo!

When I dwelt at home in plenty, thy gold did much abound,
In the company of fair young maids the Spanish ale went round.
It's a bitter change from those gay days that now I'm forced to go,
And leave my bones on Santa Cruz, far away from sweet Mayo.

They are changed girls in Irrus now; how tall they've grown and high,
With their top-knots and their hair-bags, sure I pass their buckles by.
For it's little now I heed their airs, for God has willed it so,
That I must go and leave them all far away from sweet Mayo.

It's my grief that Pat O'Loughlin is not Earl of Irrus still.
And that Brian Duff no longer rules as Lord upon the hill.
And that Colonel Hugh O'Grady should be dead and lying low,
And I sailing, sailing swiftly from the County of Mayo.

Next up it's a poem that beautifully expresses the poet's yearning to return to Ireland. Katherine Tynan was born in County Dublin in 1859 but moved to England after she married. As well as writing poetry, she wrote over 100 novels and was a close friend of WB. Yeats.

The Foggy Dew- Katharine Tynan

A splendid place is London, with golden store,
For them that have the heart and hope and youth galore;
But mournful are its streets to me, I tell you true,
For I'm longing sore for Ireland in the foggy dew.

The sun he shines all day here, so fierce and fine,
With never a wisp of mist at all to dim his shine;
The sun he shines all day here from skies of blue:
He hides his face in Ireland in the foggy dew.

The maids go out to milking in the pastures gray,
The sky is green and golden at dawn of the day;
And in the deep-drenched meadows the hay lies new,
And the corn is turning yellow in the foggy dew.

Mavrone ! if I might feel now the dew on my face,
And the wind from the mountains in that remembered place,
I'd give the wealth of London, if mine it were to do,
And I'd travel home to Ireland and the foggy dew.

The Irish Emigrant. 1880.

John Campbell

Look not for me at eventide,
I cannot come when work is done;
I go to wander far and wide,
For 'tis not here that gold is won.
Perchance where'er I go, these hands
May find me what I need to live;
Whate'er they win, if house, or lands,
I'd yield for what they cannot give.

For who can turn away his face
From home and kin and be at rest?
What country e'er can take the place
That Ireland fills within my breast?
More kindly smile the distant skies,
They say, beyond yon angry sea;
I know not what they mean, mine eyes
Have never seen these frown on me.

To me these hills beside the wave
With every year have dearer grown;
Is it so great a thing to crave
To call my native land, mine own?
But why these useless plaints renew?
Farewell! That word, it seems a knell!
If still I'm dear, kind hearts, to you,
'Tis all I ask, Farewell, Farewell!

On the boat

Jane Clarke

from *The River* (Bloodaxe Books, 2019)

On the boat we were mostly virgins,
we talked about who we were going to be -
waitresses, seamstresses, nurses,
we didn't talk about why we had to leave.

We talked about where we were going to be,
the wooden frame house with a picket fence,
but we didn't talk about why we had to leave
as we touched the lockets around our necks.

The wooden frame house with a picket fence
led to talk of lost villages, lost streets
as we touched the lockets around our necks.
We didn't foresee tenements that grew thick as trees

when we talked of lost villages, lost streets
and the diligent men we were going to marry.
We didn't foresee tenements that grew thick as trees,
the suitcase of memories we would have to carry

to the diligent men we were going to marry
when we were waitresses, seamstresses, nurses
nor the suitcase of memories we would have to carry
from the boat, where we were mostly virgins.

The Emigrant Irish

Eavan Boland

Like oil lamps, we put them out the back —

of our houses, of our minds. We had lights
better than, newer than and then

a time came, this time and now
we need them. Their dread, makeshift example:

they would have thrived on our necessities.
What they survived we could not even live.
By their lights now it is time to
imagine how they stood there, what they stood with,
that their possessions may become our power:
Cardboard. Iron. Their hardships parceled in them.
Patience. Fortitude. Long-suffering
in the bruise-colored dusk of the New World.

And all the old songs. And nothing to lose.

You Don't Get To Be Racist And Irish

By Imelda May

You don't get to be racist and Irish
You don't get to be proud of your heritage,
plights and fights for freedom
while kneeling on the neck of another!
You're not entitled to sing songs
of heroes and martyrs
mothers and fathers who cried
as they starved in a famine
Or of brave hearted
soft spoken
poets and artists
lined up in a yard
blindfolded and bound
Waiting for Godot
and point blank to sound
We emigrated
We immigrated
We took refuge
So cannot refuse
When it's our time
To return the favour
Land stolen
Spirits broken
Bodies crushed and swollen
unholy tokens of Christ, Nailed to a tree
(That) You hang around your neck
Like a noose of the free
Our colour pasty
Our accents thick
Hands like shovels
from mortar and bricklaying
foundation of cities
you now stand upon
Our suffering seeps from every stone
your opportunities arise from
Outstanding on the shoulders
of our forefathers and foremother's
who bore your mother's mother
Our music is for the righteous
Our joys have been earned
Well deserved and serve
to remind us to remember
More Blacks
More Dogs

More Irish.
Still labelled leprechauns, Micks, Paddy's,
louts
we're shouting to tell you
our land, our laws
are progressively out there
We're in a chrysalis
state of emerging into a new
and more beautiful Eire/era
40 Shades Better
Unanimous in our rainbow vote
we've found our stereotypical pot of gold
and my God it's good.
So join us.. 'cause
You Don't Get To Be Racist And Irish

Óró Sé do Beatha 'Bhaile