

Poetry June 2023

Celebration of James Joyce and Bloomsday

### **Remorse For Intemperate Speech by William Butler Yeats**

I ranted to the knave and fool,  
But outgrew that school,  
Would transform the part,  
Fit audience found, but cannot rule  
My fanatic heart.

I sought my betters: though in each  
Fine manners, liberal speech,  
Turn hatred into sport,  
Nothing said or done can reach  
My fanatic heart.

Out of Ireland have we come.  
Great hatred, little room,  
Maimed us at the start.  
I carry from my mother's womb  
A fanatic heart.

## Gas from a Burner by James Joyce

Ladies and gents, you are here assembled  
To hear why earth and heaven trembled  
Because of the black and sinister arts  
Of an Irish writer in foreign parts.  
He sent me a book ten years ago:  
I read it a hundred times or so,  
Backwards and forwards, down and up,  
Through both the ends of a telescope.  
I printed it all to the very last word  
But by the mercy of the Lord  
The darkness of my mind was rent  
And I saw the writer's foul intent.  
But I owe a duty to Ireland:  
I hold her honour in my hand,  
This lovely land that always sent  
Her writers and artists to banishment  
And in a spirit of Irish fun  
Betrayed her own leaders, one by one.  
'Twas Irish humour, wet and dry,  
Flung quicklime into Parnell's eye;  
'Tis Irish brains that save from doom  
The leaky barge of the Bishop of Rome  
For everyone knows the Pope can't belch  
Without the consent of Billy Walsh.  
O Ireland my first and only love  
Where Christ and Caesar are hand and glove!  
O lovely land where the shamrock grows!  
(Allow me, ladies, to blow my nose)  
To show you for strictures I don't care a button  
I printed the poems of Mountainy Mutton  
And a play he wrote (you've read it, I'm sure)  
Where they talk of "bastard," "bugger" and "whore,"  
And a play on the Word and Holy Paul

And some woman's legs that I can't recall,  
Written by Moore, a genuine gent  
That lives on his property's ten per cent:  
I printed mystical books in dozens:  
I printed the table-book of Cousins  
Though (asking your pardon) as for the verse  
Twould give you a heartburn on your arse:  
I printed folklore from North and South  
By Gregory of the Golden Mouth:  
I printed poets, sad, silly and solemn:  
I printed Patrick What-do-you-Colm:  
I printed the great John Milicent Synge  
Who soars above on an angel's wing  
In the playboy shift that he pinched as swag  
From Maunsel's manager's travelling-bag.  
But I draw the line at that bloody fellow  
That was over here dressed in Austrian yellow,  
Spouting Italian by the hour  
To O'Leary Curtis and John Wyse Power  
And writing of Dublin, dirty and dear,  
In a manner no blackamoor printer could bear.  
Shite and onions! Do you think I'll print  
The name of the Wellington Monument,  
Sydney Parade and Sandymount tram,  
Downes's cakeshop and Williams's jam?  
I'm damned if I do--I'm damned to blazes!  
Talk about Irish Names of Places!  
It's a wonder to me, upon my soul,  
He forgot to mention Curly's Hole.  
No, ladies, my press shall have no share in  
So gross a libel on Stepmother Erin.  
I pity the poor--that's why I took  
A red-headed Scotchman to keep my book.  
Poor sister Scotland! Her doom is fell;  
She cannot find any more Stuarts to sell.

My conscience is fine as Chinese silk:  
My heart is as soft as buttermilk.  
Colm can tell you I made a rebate  
Of one hundred pounds on the estimate  
I gave him for his Irish Review.  
I love my country--by herrings I do!  
I wish you could see what tears I weep  
When I think of the emigrant train and ship.  
That's why I publish far and wide  
My quite illegible railway guide.  
In the porch of my printing institute  
The poor and deserving prostitute  
Plays every night at catch-as-catch-can  
With her tight-breeched British artilleryman  
And the foreigner learns the gift of the gab  
From the drunken draggletail Dublin drab.  
Who was it said: Resist not evil?  
I'll burn that book, so help me devil.  
I'll sing a psalm as I watch it burn  
And the ashes I'll keep in a one-handed urn.  
I'll penance do with farts and groans  
Kneeling upon my marrowbones.  
This very next lent I will unbare  
My penitent buttocks to the air  
And sobbing beside my printing press  
My awful sin I will confess.  
My Irish foreman from Bannockburn  
Shall dip his right hand in the urn  
And sign crisscross with reverent thumb  
"Memento homo" upon my bum.

# Bloomsday, Sandycove, 2022

A new work by Thomas McCarthy

Thomas McCarthy

I only came here for the coddle and hard dry bread,  
But this crowd has swept me along into the froth  
Of 1904, the band playing as if on a promenade  
And straw boaters floating on the print of sunlight

Like sycamore wings. The L.E. James Joyce on site  
And incongruous as Trieste, though all my thoughts  
Are of boats and children and ponds. White  
As our pale hands, homes are glued to the spot

Where money still resides. Where Jesuits fought  
With their consciences, the children of privilege  
Will be-sport themselves still, taking for excuse

A book and not 'Throwaway' in the Cup at Ascot.  
It is like somebody brought a winner into the village:

The day a golden rosette, his book such good news.

*Thomas McCarthy's latest work is Poetry, Memory and the Party (Gallery Press, 2021)*

## Brighton Square 1882

*By Gerard Smyth Poetry Editor of The Irish Times*

*He would become a keeper of superstitions,  
subvert a language, tilt its axis,  
play god with all his ready characters –  
not one of them was fictional.*

But first, a crooning father,  
a mother who believed in miracles.  
Between them in his cradle  
a son already listening to the operatic arias  
so often sung in Brighton Square.  
He was the talk of the village,

of the tidy gardens, a child  
born on a nascent day of spring,  
too late for the Feast of Brigid  
but quickly carried to the Christening font  
where he saw his own reflection  
and was spellbound by the image.

There was rejoicing in the square.  
Neighbour watching neighbour  
to see who would bring the first gift to his crib,  
who would ask to hold him and whisper  
in his ear *Out there you'll find your river,  
your city, the bedrock of your life....*

**LOWER DRUMCONDRA** by Éilís Ní Dhuibhne

Griffith Park has beauty.  
Willows, dandelions  
And tumbling chestnuts  
Choirs of children laughing.  
In the bubbling river  
a heron always stands  
Watching, on a rock,  
Like any artist.

These shining slopes  
Are built upon a dump.  
Once the Millmount hills  
Were lumps of rubbish,  
mouldy offal, Micky Mud.  
How it must have stunk.

He spread his wings  
And headed south  
Through Dorset Street  
and Eccles.  
North Richmond which is blind.  
And on and on  
and on.

Sixteen moves  
Before he reached the boat.  
Not quite a house for every year.  
But close.

When he was twelve  
He lived on the riverside  
He saw the heron,  
legs delicate and long,

Enchanting midstream  
In the land of tundish.

She stands in the river still  
Sublime upon her rock  
Listening to the best English  
The ardent river song.

The Joyce's house is gone.

## **My Mother says No on Bloomsday**

### **Mary O'Donnell**

It is not easy, it is not easy  
to wheel an old woman to the shower

on Bloomsday, when the world  
and Molly cry *yes, yes, yes,*

and she is saying *no, no, no,*  
because what's left of her life

depends on the freedom of No.  
How Joycean of her

to resist the cleaned-up conscience  
of filial attention, your need



to fix her taints and odours,  
wash hair and teeth,

attend to toes when all she wants  
is to float on the lily-leaf of her own

green bedspread, drowsing Molly  
in a tangle of snow-white hair.

Now, dreams enclose her  
more than talk of showers or meals,

the flowing waters of memory  
rise and touch her skin

just where the mattress eases  
spine and bones

in that yellow-walled room.

*Hello, my darling*, she greets

his photograph, flinging kisses  
towards mottled frame.

To her then,  
the logic of love,

to her, the logic of *No*,  
her tongue untameable.

## Dublin by Louis MacNeice

Grey brick upon brick,  
Declamatory bronze  
On sombre pedestals –  
O'Connell, Grattan, Moore –  
And the brewery tugs and the swans  
On the balustraded stream  
And the bare bones of a fanlight  
Over a hungry door  
And the air soft on the cheek  
And porter running from the taps  
With a head of yellow cream  
And Nelson on his pillar  
Watching his world collapse.

This never was my town,  
I was not born or bred  
Nor schooled here and she will not  
Have me alive or dead  
But yet she holds my mind  
With her seedy elegance,  
With her gentle veils of rain  
And all her ghosts that walk  
And all that hide behind  
Her Georgian facades –  
The catcalls and the pain,  
The glamour of her squalor,  
The bravado of her talk.

The lights jig in the river  
With a concertina movement  
And the sun comes up in the morning  
Like barley-sugar on the water  
And the mist on the Wicklow hills  
Is close, as close

As the peasantry were to the landlord,  
As the Irish to the Anglo-Irish,  
As the killer is close one moment  
To the man he kills,  
Or as the moment itself  
Is close to the next moment.

She is not an Irish town  
And she is not English,  
Historic with guns and vermin  
And the cold renown  
Of a fragment of Church latin,  
Of an oratorical phrase.  
But oh the days are soft,  
Soft enough to forget  
The lesson better learnt,  
The bullet on the wet  
Streets, the crooked deal,  
The steel behind the laugh,  
The Four Courts burnt.

Fort of the Dane,  
Garrison of the Saxon,  
Augustan capital  
Of a Gaelic nation,  
Appropriating all  
The alien brought,  
You give me time for thought  
And by a juggler's trick  
You poise the toppling hour –  
O greyness run to flower,  
Grey stone, grey water,  
And brick upon grey brick.

“Do you know what a pearl is and what an opal is? My soul when you came sauntering to me first through those sweet summer evenings was beautiful but with the pale passionless beauty of a pearl. Your love has passed through me and now I feel my mind something like an opal, that is, full of strange uncertain hues and colours, of warm lights and quick shadows and of broken music.”

— James Joyce, *Selected Letters of James Joyce*

Experience the affirmative power of the closing words of Ulysses through our new short film, produced in collaboration with Museum of Literature Ireland (MoLI).

Scored by composer Caterina Schembri and performed by Julia Spanu and Chamber Choir Ireland, the film features actors, artists and writers in over 40 locations across six continents.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUOke9HbqHM&t=154s>