



POESIA AO MEIO DIA



WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS (1865-1939)

ADAM'S CURSE

WE SAT TOGETHER AT ONE SUMMER'S END,
THAT BEAUTIFUL MILD WOMAN, YOUR CLOSE FRIEND,
AND YOU AND I, AND TALKED OF POETRY.
I SAID, "A LINE WILL TAKE US HOURS MAYBE;
YET IF IT DOES NOT SEEM A MOMENT'S THOUGHT,
OUR STITCHING AND UNSTITCHING HAS BEEN NAUGHT.
BETTER GO DOWN UPON YOUR MARROW-BONES
AND SCRUB A KITCHEN PAVEMENT, OR BREAK STONES
LIKE AN OLD PAUPER, IN ALL KINDS OF WEATHER;
FOR TO ARTICULATE SWEET SOUNDS TOGETHER
IS TO WORK HARDER THAN ALL THESE, AND YET
BE THOUGHT AN IDLER BY THE NOISY SET
OF BANKERS, SCHOOLMASTERS, AND CLERGYMEN
THE MARTYRS CALL THE WORLD."

AND THEREUPON

THAT BEAUTIFUL MILD WOMAN FOR WHOSE SAKE
THERE'S MANY A ONE SHALL FIND OUT ALL HEARTACHE
ON FINDING THAT HER VOICE IS SWEET AND LOW
REPLIED, "TO BE BORN WOMAN IS TO KNOW—
ALTHOUGH THEY DO NOT TALK OF IT AT SCHOOL—
THAT WE MUST LABOUR TO BE BEAUTIFUL."
I SAID, "IT'S CERTAIN THERE IS NO FINE THING
SINCE ADAM'S FALL BUT NEEDS MUCH LABOURING.
THERE HAVE BEEN LOVERS WHO THOUGHT LOVE SHOULD BE
SO MUCH COMPOUNDED OF HIGH COURTESY
THAT THEY WOULD SIGH AND QUOTE WITH LEARNED LOOKS
PRECEDENTS OUT OF BEAUTIFUL OLD BOOKS;
YET NOW IT SEEMS AN IDLE TRADE ENOUGH."

WE SAT GROWN QUIET AT THE NAME OF LOVE;
WE SAW THE LAST EMBERS OF DAYLIGHT DIE,
AND IN THE TREMBLING BLUE-GREEN OF THE SKY
A MOON, WORN AS IF IT HAD BEEN A SHELL
WASHED BY TIME'S WATERS AS THEY ROSE AND FELL
ABOUT THE STARS AND BROKE IN DAYS AND YEARS.
I HAD A THOUGHT FOR NO ONE'S BUT YOUR EARS:
THAT YOU WERE BEAUTIFUL, AND THAT I STROVE
TO LOVE YOU IN THE OLD HIGH WAY OF LOVE;
THAT IT HAD ALL SEEMED HAPPY, AND YET WE'D GROWN
AS WEARY-HEARTED AS THAT HOLLOW MOON.



MARIA EDGEWORTH IN 1847

SHE WAS TOUCHED BY THE GENEROSITY OF THE PORTERS WHO CARRIED THE RICE AND INDIA MEAL TO THE VESSELS FOR SHIPMENT TO IRELAND IN THE FAMINE, REFUSING ALL PAYMENT; AND SHE KNIT WITH HER OWN HANDS A WOOLLEN COMFORTER FOR EACH PORTER, OF BRIGHT AND PRETTY COLOURS, WHICH SHE SENT TO A FRIEND TO PRESENT TO THE MEN, WHO WERE PROUD AND GRATEFUL FOR THE GIFTS; BUT, ALAS! BEFORE THEY RECEIVED THEM, THOSE KIND HANDS WERE COLD, AND THAT WARM HEART HAD CEASED TO BEAT.

A MEMOIR OF MARIA EDGEWORTH

BY FRANCES EDGEWORTH

ANGER. WORK. CONFUSION – WHAT IS TO BE DONE?
– THE ATLANTIC IN THE WAY AND THE NEWS GETTING WORSE,
WORK STRETCHING TO OCCUPY EVERY HOUR IN THE DAY,
CARRYING BACK AND FORTH, LIFTING BEARING AND SETTING DOWN.

WE ARE IN THE CENTURIES WHEN WORK TOLD THE BODY HOW
TO LIFT, FASTEN AND DRAG, THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD NEEDED HEAVING,
WHEN THE HORSES STAGGERED AND SLOWED ON THE STEEP HILL
THE COACH TOO FULL, TOO HEAVY TO DRAG ONWARDS –

THEY STOPPED FEARFULLY AND THE CHILD FROM THE CABIN
WAS WAITING FOR HIS CHANCE, HE RAN OUT WITH A STONE
PUSHED IT BEHIND THE WHEEL SO THE HORSES COULD BREATHE
AND WAITED FOR THE FARTHINGS FLUNG FROM THE PASSENGERS'
WINDOWS.

NOW HE IS CARRYING SACKS OF MEAL TO THE BOAT
BACK AND FORTH, LOADED THEN FREE, AND THE WORK STRETCHING
AHEAD
LIKE THE ROAD WHERE AT THE SAME MOMENT MARIA EDGEWORTH
WALKS OUT, HER YOUNG SERVANT BESIDE HER CARRYING

THE BASKET THAT GETS A BIT LIGHTER
AT EVERY CABIN DOOR. THIS IS HER WORK NOW
AT THE END OF HER LIFE. AT HOME,
SHE SITS DOWN TO THE STORY SHE IS WRITING,

LINE AFTER LINE, HER HAND STRAYING BACK AND FORTH
ACROSS HER REMAINING PAGES. THE CHILD FROM THE CABIN
IS A MAN CARRYING MEAL TO THE DOCKS, AND AT LAST
THE DAY IS OVER, AND TIME FOR HIM TO BE PAID –

BUT HE IS TOO ANGRY, HIS COLLEAGUES ARE TOO ANGRY
TO TAKE MONEY FOR HELPING TO FEED STARVING PEOPLE. AND SHE
WHO IS NOT EVER RECORDED AS BEING ANGRY
TAKES OUT HER KNITTING NEEDLES AND THE LONG SKEINS OF WOOL

THE WOMEN HAVE SPUN IN THE CABINS, TO MAKE
A WARM COMFORTER FOR EVERY MAN, HER NEEDLES
TWITCHING BACK AND FORTH UNTIL THE WORK IS DONE.
SHE IS FAMOUS AND FORTUNATE, SHE WILL BE REMEMBERED.

LIKE THE GIRL WHOSE BROTHERS WERE TURNED INTO SWANS,
SHE DOES WHAT SHE KNOWS, THE LONG SCARVES PILING
SOFTLY BESIDE HER CHAIR, ONE AFTER THE OTHER LIKE THE DAYS.

THE MEN ARE FAR FROM HOME WHEN HER GIFT REACHES THEM, THE
TRACE
OF THEIR WORK UNRAVELLING LIKE A WORN THREAD OF WOOL, THEIR
KINDNESS
OUT OF ANGER STRETCHED OUT ACROSS THE ATLANTIC, FOR AN ANSWER.



EILÉAN NÍ CHUILLEANÁIN

HER WORK

FOR JANET MULLARNEY

JUST SHADOWS, LIKE ALL THAT WE CREATE,
ONE OF THEM FLAUNTS A CORE OF BRIGHT RED,
EXPOSED; IT IS THE LINING OF A MOUTH

SURPRISED, GASPING, SHAKING – THEN WHO KNOWS
WHAT OTHERS MIGHT HIDE, THOSE DEFT SHADOWS
THAT DIVE AND POUNCE FOR A PLACE TO LAND?

AT FIRST SHE CAN ONLY GUESS THEIR FORM
AS DISTANCE SHRINKS AND MULTIPLIES THEM,
RIGHT UNTIL THE LAST PLACE THEY FINISH;

BUT SHE CATCHES THEM, HER GRIP SHAPING
MEASURING PRESSING THE FERTILE TWIST:
A NEW LIFE, CAPTURED AGAINST THE LIGHT.

AS A CHILD MAKES DOLLS OBEY HER CALL
THE STUFF SHE HOLDS SHUDDERS YIELDS AND WARPS
INTO A WORD, AND NOW IN FOCUS

NO LONGER LOOKS LIKE A TALKING BIRD –
HANDLED AND HUMAN, THE COLOUR SCUFFED,
A FEMALE HEAD, ELOQUENT, ANGRY.

*SHE'LL NEVER WASH ALL THAT STAIN AWAY:
THE COLOURS HAVE SPREAD UNDER HER NAILS,
HER HANDS DIPPED DEEPER, WET WITH SHADOWS.*



EILÉAN NÍ CHUILLEANÁIN

STABAT MATER

AT LAST THE PAGE IS PEELED AWAY,
THE LAST PAGE, LIKE A COVERING FROM A WOUND,
AND THE TRANSPARENT SHEET BENEATH IS ANOTHER PAGE
ON WHICH IS WRITTEN, 'YOU HAVE NO ENEMY'.
— JUST LOOK. IT IS DAMAGE ITSELF, AND WHAT LIGHTS UP
THE SCARRED FLESH TO THE VIEW
OF THE FLINCHING EYE, OF THE ONE
WHO SAW IT ALL AND LET US KNOW, IN WORDS
WE CAN'T READ RIGHTLY, UNTIL TOUCH TEACHES —

AS YOU CAN ONLY FIND OUT BY PUSHING
FORWARD IN THE CROWD
UNTIL YOUR BODY IS PRESSED
FLAT AGAINST THE GLASS.
BEHIND THE GLASS IS THE SHADOW OF SUFFERING,
AND IT SHIVERS BECAUSE IT FEELS YOUR TOUCH,
IT'S ALIVE. BUT OTHERS ARE PRESSING
BEHIND, AND YOU MUST MOVE ALONG,
AND WHEN YOU LOOK BACK
TO THE HOUSE OF MOURNING
THE SHUTTERS INSIDE SHUTTERS HAVE CLOSED
DOWN, FOLDED, EACH ONE WITH A DAY'S DATE.

WHEN THE CALENDAR WAS IN ITS FORCE
THEY ALL FITTED TOGETHER
AS THE LEAVES FIT THE TREE
OF ATROCITIES, AND EVEN NOW
YOU CAN STILL HEAR THE ELATION
OF THE STRINGS, THEIR LONG HOPPING
AS THE ALTO FILLS HER LUNGS
TO LEAD OFF *STABAT MATER*.



EILÉAN NÍ CHUILLEANÁIN

THE WORDS COLLIDE

THE SCRIBE OBJECTS. YOU CAN'T PUT IT LIKE THAT,
I CAN'T WRITE THAT. BUT THE CLIENT
IS A TOUGH SMALL WOMAN FORTY YEARS OLD.
SHE INSISTS. SHE NEEDS HER LETTER
TO OPEN OUT FULL OF PLEATED REVOLVING SILK
AND THE SOFT LOBES OF HER EARS
WHERE SHE FLAUNTS THOSE THIN SILVER WIRES.
SHE WANTS TO TELL HER DREAM TO THE ONLY ONE
WHO WILL GET THE DRIFT. HOW SHE SAW THEIR CHILDREN LYING,
EVERY ONE DRESSED OUT IN THEIR SIMPLE FEARS. THEY GLOWED,
THE SHAPE OF THEIR SENTENCE OUTLINED IN SEA GREEN.
AMONG THOSE BELOVED EXILES
ONE SIGHED HAPPY, AS A CURTAIN
LIGHTENED AND THE GRAMMAR CHANGED, AND THE WALL
SHOWED PURE WHITE IN THE SHAPE OF A BIRD'S WING.
BUT WHEN SHE WHISPERED IT TO THE SCRIBE HE FROWNED
AND SHE SAW SHE HAD GOT IT WRONG, SHE HAD COME
TO A PLACE WHERE THEY ALL SPOKE THE ONE LANGUAGE:
IT ROSE UP BEFORE HER LIKE A QUAY WALL
DRAPED IN SABLE WEEDS. HE SAID,
YOU CAN'T PUT THOSE WORDS INTO YOUR LETTER.
IT WILL WEIGH TOO HEAVY, IT WILL COST TOO MUCH,
IT WILL BREAK THE STRAP OF THE POSTMAN'S BAG,
IT WILL CRACK HIS COLLARBONE. THE BRIDGES
ARE ALL SO BAD NOW, WITH THAT WEIGHT TO SHIFT
HE'S BOUND TO STUMBLE. HE'LL NEVER MAKE IT ALIVE.



EILÉAN NÍ CHUILLEANÁIN

THE MORANDI BRIDGE

TLET ME LEAN MY CHEEK AGAINST THIS LIMESTONE PILLAR –
I WANT TO PRESS UNTIL I FEEL THE BUZZING,
THE SOUND THE WORLD MAKES WHEN IT ISN'T GOING
ANYWHERE, A PURR OF GREY TRANSPARENT WINGS

HOVERING IN ONE PLACE. A HUMMING TO ITSELF
BECAUSE IT NEEDS TO LIE STILL, STAY QUIET AND
RECOVER, AND WHO WILL BRING HELP?

THE NOISE
WHEN THE BRIDGE FELL DOWN IN GENOVA – THE ROAD

YOU AND I DROVE ALONG SLOWLY, HEADING EAST
BEHIND A SMALL FIAT, PACKED AND WEIGHED DOWN
WITH PEOPLE, CAKE AND FLOWERS FOR A MOTHER-IN-LAW
THAT MADE A SUNDAY LUNCH; THEY WERE TAKING THEIR TIME –

IT WAS LUNCHTIME AGAIN EACH YEAR WHEN WE REACHED THE
BRIDGE,
AND THE FAMILIES WERE ALWAYS ON THE MOVE,
SO WE'D DRIVE ALONG SLOWLY, THOSE FIFTEEN MINUTES
HIGH UP OVER THE FACTORIES AND STREETS –

I WOULD TELL YOU THIS NEWS IF THE STONES OF THE WORLD
COULD CARRY LANGUAGE, BUT AFTER EIGHT MONTHS, THE SHOCK
AND THE NOISE INSIDE THEM STILL, THEY CANNOT MOVE
OR EVEN ALLOW A MESSAGE TO PASS THROUGH.

APRIL 2019.



EILÉAN NÍ CHUILLEANÁIN

AN IMPERFECT ENCLOSURE

FOR NANO NAGLO

SHE WAS OUT IN ALL WEATHERS.
SHE WAS TIRED, SOMEONE GAVE HER
A CHAIR IN A SHOP. RESTED
AND THEN AWAY, IN THE STREET, ON THE MOVE.

THE HOUSE SHE BUILT FIRST, GIVING
ON THE STREET – COULD SHE CLOSE UP
DOORS AND WINDOWS ON THAT SIDE?
IT WOULD BE NOTICED AS A CONVENT.

SHE ASKED TO BE BURIED IN
THE COMMON CEMETERY.
THEY BROKE THROUGH THE WALL
OF THE NUNS' GRAVEYARD

AND SLIPPED HER COFFIN INSIDE.
BUT SHE WOULD NOT STAY,
SO THEY BUILT HER A STONE TOMB
NEARER TO COVE LANE

AND OPENED A LATCH AT ONE END
SO HANDS CAN TOUCH THE COFFIN.

