

JAMES LIDDY

Prayer of a Pagan

Voluptuousness torturer of bodies
Do not lessen your flames
Warm up my numbed heart
Goddess hear my prayer

Goddess burning in the air
Torch for us in the underground
Melt this frozen soul
Who dedicates to you a song of bronze.

Voluptuousness
Be my queen
Take the mask of a Siren
Made of flesh and velvet

Pour over me rich sleep
In formless mystic wine
Voluptuousness resilient ghost.

The Death of Mathematicians

They brood through vaults of notebooks
To try to figure what
Abandons itself to the music of that country

Above ours which shames us.
From the room in the little house
Descending to the verbal history

And midnight potions of their friends
They go out to the street to listen.
What is the truth that fills their May morning?

“The cries of the curlews tear you to pieces.”
An Angel simply restating
You have to be the agent of the sacrifice

That makes Death the most beautiful Reality
Like Eskimos in the snow or the hearts
of the Aztecs.

Letter to Sainte-Beuve

Beardless then on the old oak benches
Huddled under a square patch of solitude
I drank the bitter milk of lessons
It was in the memorable and stupid time
That professors made to widen the courses
Gave way to our crazy pressure to read you.
Which of us in those pale days of adolescence
Did not know the torpor of being locked up
[Our eye lost in summer or snow dazzle]
Did not wait to rush on the distant
Echo of a book or the shout of a riot.
Specially in summer when the leads melted
And the high blackened walls were sad
And the yapping falcons (the dove's terror)
Doze in the turrets under a blazing sky
Season of the Muse in a pealing bell
And Melancholy at midday when all sleep
With an eye more blue than the *Religiuse*
Drags herself with precocious boredoms
Her forehead moist with midnight languors
And the bad evenings the feverish nights
Which make girls love their own bodies
And makes them see (sterile voluptuousness)
The fruits of their nubility in the mirror
Italian evening of lazy casualness
Which introduce us to deviate pleasures
When the dark Venus from high black balconies
Sends down waves of musk from cool censors.
In this decadent scene taught by your poems
I took the story of Amaury upon my heart
The poison drugged me drop by drop
Who from fifteen was swept towards Hell
I parched with strange tastes for the unknown
Readily understood Renè's sighs
And since then whether in a garden sanctuary
Or beneath suns of different hemispheres
The perpetual lolling of the drunken swell
The reborn look of horizons without end
Carry my heart to the divine dream.
In the heavy leisure hours of a hot day
Or in the shivery smoke which hides the ceiling

Everywhere I have followed the mystery
Of this book so dear to numbed souls
Whose destiny marks them with the same sickness
And before the mirror I have practised
The perverse art a demon gave me
At birth—to discover a true voluptuousness
From pain—scratching one's wound.

Poet, as regards you I am as a lover
Towards a ghost who is full of kisses
Whose hand and eye have unknown charms
To drain away virility. All adored creatures
Are vessels of venom we drink with closed eyes
And the pierced heart loving its pain
Dies every day blessing its arrow.

Death of the Poor

It is Death that consoles us and keeps us alive
The aim of life and the unique hope
The elixir that wakes us and lets us drink
And gives us the heart to go till evening.

Through the blizzard snow and hoarfrost
It is the light trembling on our black horizon
The wonderful Inn written in the Book
Where a man may eat sleep and sit

It is an Angel who holds in his erotic fingers
The dream and the gift of decadent moments
Who brings a lover to poor and naked men

It is our fatherland
The joy of Gods
The blissful barn
The stock exchange of bohemians
The airport for the unknown Heavens.

The Price

Man in order to be erotic
And a artist must pay the price
Of breeding two kinds of roses

The yellow rose of madness
The blue rose of the impossible
To be grown by your tears

You will have to show God
Your secret garden that few have seen
And then the angels

Will approve the colours and shapes
And he will say:
"You are beautiful enough to join."

The Debt

Dear Arthur Symons, a lily
For you because you loved him
Best in English and said,
“The Poet of Evil is not dead.”

Your Inverness cape and sombrero
Dining alone in his hotels
Taking photographs of thirty
Of the houses he wept in.

Satan like smoke behind you
Serving with intense luxury
Abhorrence and the ardent
Fires that stir the dead.

Your beautiful mind blown
To a thousand lilies floating
Down the green waters
Of Salvation in Lethe.

Wearing a Millstone

How easy for us who knew truth like the sunrise
To spread our convictions as merchandise
Before inexperienced buying eyes.
Eloquence was our trading partner;
Our instinct to be the revolutionary martyr

To lead the more intransigent astray
Meant merely use of exceptional powers
And that was easy when you sincerely teach.
Of course they will be seduced anyway
By much less interesting ironies than ours
But we held no licence to preach.

Blue Mountain

Blue mountains are of themselves blue mountains
And white clouds are of themselves white clouds
And there is a blue mountain, Croghan Kinsella,
And around it there are often white clouds.

Whether all things are accurately themselves
Or modifications of each other I do not know
But clear mornings from my bathroom window
I see white clouds and a blue mountain.

A Father

— *to the friend of my school days,*
John Fennessy

The Psalmist speaks of love
Between father and child as a fearful thing.

We remember Absalom swinging in the trees
And his father, a vigorous man,
Spent in the cry of an upper chamber.
A father is a precipice dweller
For through history fathers have wished their kingdoms
Or the contents of their hovels on their sons
Whether they be strong as trees or weaklings
Yet have never known whether they will inherit
And some have put their own in the grave.
If a child disappoints wretchedly or dies
A parent born once dies twice.

The father drives the highway to work
Thinking about his children.
What will happen to them later, now protected
By the simplicities of the good home?
All that can do harm to them plagues him:
Bullied by the neighbourhood toughs
Or being close to the wrong boy or girl for long.
(Yeats heard the storm on Gregory's wood and feared.)
Anything may occur, that is the future.
A father knows this hapless before the fact
Ever denying himself the luxury of overt advice.
He knows he must be discarded
His the seed that fructified and then had to die
In order to give abundance to the new.
His love trying to be perfect must disappear
But his dilemma is that it continues
By its very nature unable to cease.

Who rears offspring sharpens a sword for himself.

Vigo

On a Protestant Mystic

Through grass again I am bound to the Lord
He intoned but he didn't really mean it.
How could he when he lived in the city
Where every morning he took a tram
To relentlessly edit the economics journal
So influential in the new emergent nation?
On Sundays instead of praying on the mountains
He kept open house (tea and buns but no drink)
For poetasters who flocked for his wisdom.
Though a saint and helpful to the young
No wonder his verses got woollier and woollier
And his pictures progressively vaguer
Until they were willowy figures in a mist.
To find the God he talked about through his beard
He should have left his proofs unread
On the table and the letters unanswered,
Gone to a quiet spot further than the mountains,
Taken off quickly his cumbersome clothes,
And lain in the wavy blue-green grass.

El Fervor de Palma

—for Elaine Kerrigan

It is warm and blue coming to Christmas.
Flowerpots on balconies bloom to sea.
Enredadera hangs its purple tangle
On walls, and smells of Wicklow.

To stay in a minor key is religious,
To pray a little within the self
And finding it not a temple
But a terrace of drowsy flora.

■
My disease brilliant attacks of exaggeration.
If one has been fairly well-paid piper
for half a century one is always a piper.
First day: The Beat generation, fifty-five
strong in the daised classroom.
I come in and tell them the scene is true: "I am an old King
of the Beats weary in my bones.
Exercise is the kindness of ageing.
You could leave it here. Let me
say, 'Why don't you just relax
and enjoy God?' That's what's printed
In the first text I teach, Dharma Bums."

■
All the journeys
To be made
For instance, over the seas.
The bars of Salamanca
Or Third Avenue
Or flying over the Styx
In a cloud of unreason and whiskies
I sit on a bench on Christmas
 Eve (the fog was
 thick) and think
 of Jameson
Rose in the mud.

■
For all who trod
Golden North American streets
An internal immigrant.
Seller
From a cart seen at the kitchen door
In childhood.
Death in summer
What we did not see and can never imagine
The garden and the dew on his
Shoes (we cannot wear them)
George takes down the photo
Graph and kisses it meaning
more than what we saw
in childhood, our fates
and fortunes, our works
and ways.

The Necessity Of Writing In This Tongue

A closed then an open meeting.
We speak in a language about to
be written, once it was a language
we thought in. It is the 19th c.
on the page: lyricism, lunch time.

Tribal speech at the door with a drink.
Kmen the word for tribe: the circumstance
of a body, the lightning of a tongue.
We start slowly, at first using
Slovak in private correspondence:
Koine. It shines like a drink or a
kiss in a room of professors.

These sounds in the right landscape,
for curing. Let us label it
burnt offering, a burnt language
from the hides of the tribe,
offered from the fields through
the ploughs, from the rocks
the piling of stone hedges,
Slovakia, the mud of your beautiful face.

After Kraske

There were those who spoke and listened
who said mercy, forgiveness
so they became temples—not temples
of the Holy Ghost, that sick joke told
by Christians who want to have nothing
to do with Christ's body, His body holy
only to those who know what bodies are.

Blessed are those that so speak, who did no
more than what they would do on an
ordinary day. All right, I have
brought Christ into it, what did He say:
“They shall be saved who also did nothing,
they shall be last who said more than they
should have on an ordinary day, no forgiveness
inside their tongue or mercy hidden in
their cheek. Besides they did not get
going during the festival.”

To which I add my tuppenny ha'penny worth:
blessed are those who heard grasshoppers
in the yard, who smoked dope in the
VW bus, who had beer cans on the garage
roof, and no clothes on in the wood,
who passed St. Joseph's Church on Sunday
to the beach humming the idea of God.
Blessed are they whose point of
blessedness is rapture.

The Saadians, Marbled, Tile, And Flower

Small spurts of green, flowers like lavender,
large forget-me-knots, hundreds of dwarf palms.
The sprinkle of peace in the garden
beyond the horseshoe arches of
the Mihrab carpets. Flowers around
tombs. The guide in Fez
says they are “serviteurs,” in fact
princesses of princesses.

The Kashbah Mosque, deep ochre,
olive trees steady everywhere.
There is not God but God and Mohammed
is married—praise to God as
I repeat the prayers of rosewater heaven,
stalactites . . . for building a rendezvous,
a “date-house” for the dead.

White pillars under the painted horseshoes
cool, a tool for knowing dream-death,
Under the shadowy walls mother
of petal in the garden with her class
the well-aired fortunettes.
The tombs a second invitation:
a pale willow a silver poplar
the single cypress sounding in the sky.

Prince princess in high ochre enclosure:
share the resurrection from the sick.
In the mountains none of this happens
the seven spheres plunge without illumination
the columns of glory without a break
each court person needs peacefulness
that after perusal becomes an island.

Pearl on tile dew of death in a sweet
hidden way indulged from view.
Yes, choose the point of the soul
that can linger on the zellig-covered
colours (where death-in-life is generous),
lying out in the open
outside secondary princes,

children maybe whom Exit clad
in the earth robes of the garden.

Over a basin with green tiled roof
yellow bills of blackbirds coo
solitary tree green ladder into space.
Plumbago slicing along wall
greyish-blue or violet tongues
a broader bluer flower of a boxed
shrub the path circles around,
roses down the side not near the tombs
stems leaves delicate unreal shades
prospecting the alternative beauty
the artificial . . . salmon-coloured roses,
a burst of purpose in a few bushes.

Out of vast redness red tower
of the Koutoubia, range after range of
the snow-covered Atlases,
blue sky on evening tide will turn
yellow at the base orange in the middle.
Snow music the muzzein's microphoned
fireword doesn't disturb the scents,
the tiles go in different directions
at angles or into diamond cards.

You did not accomplish works of peace
yet you entered and left a holy garden.
A long-billed stork flies in,
a nest on royal palace chimney.
The mountains are built of crystal rather than rock.
Surfeited with rosemary, no foreigner to luxury,
Mother your soul carried beyond the wall.

— *April 1987, Marrakesh*

Last Light in Clare's Mind

It has rained like showers of arrows
a warm day in the yard. Pansy clips
up the drive for dinner, the red Fiat
muddy before the shed. Come let's sit
in the sun on the white garden seat
under a pear tree; Clare's wearing
a black dressing gown with
faded gold buttons. Big trees drowse
beyond the Dairy wall. Wind performs
a small peacock on pear boughs.
The wings of the angel of death
have a soft landing, no glaring.
The notes of Chopin etudes on the piano
reply from the study window,
the golden cocker spaniels "Ginger" and
"Mi Wadi" materialise. Buzz of insect summer.
A last setting outside the kitchen door
and death shall have its Scotch and soda.

The Mass priest says: Jesus is no magician.
He whispers in no ones' ears, he works
through people. So it is but this morning
he whispered in both our ears:
I shall officiate right here.

Requiem For A Non-Croppy

Speak, God of visions, plead for me
and tell me why violence answers love.
There are only two reasons for travelling: restaurants
and neglected public monuments. There are two reasons for
keeping alive: being in love
and ambiguity. At the top of Gorey blossoms
Gorey Hill unfavoured by garden flowers.
Somewhere on it lies a monument to a curate
caught between the boys of a hot summer.
Out of respect for his bishop he refused the Host to
rebels in the chapel; he rushed to check the looting
of Camolin Park—but he was summoned to stony
Mountnorris standing on the courthouse step. . .
We ask the people where the monument on the hill is,
they confuse it with ninety-eight cross at the foot.
An overgrown lane with no gravel, mid-ridge of grass,
past two houses to stop at a gate:
out of the corner of an eye a concrete mass
topped by a cross. A way through thick flies,
bees, the pandering butterfly. “On this spot
Fr. John Redmond was hanged by the British
in the year seventeen ninety-eight.” The past
is not out of date, the future has been born.
Forlorn saggart shade on the green slope
knocked and dragged up here by yeos
to this dilemma in history. The bright sun
of freedom burns above the vapour
of North Wexford farms; Lord of Hosts,
immerse my life in the passionate heat
of all. We have travelled
come to look at the place of a skull.

Warm Mountain Poem For Matt Liban

Out to the yard a faintest blush tinge
I come inside and look at
a yellow wagtail out the window. Lights
on the mountain, are there farmer-lovers
at work? Is there a dairy of hands?
On the gold-bearing mountainside,
ringed by farms like a fort, do they
close their eyes? Standing stones
on top of Hart's Hill is a trysting place
in white frost. A Land League stone,
hidden by trees from the White Heaps,
tells farmers: keep a grip on your lands.
A swan white breast in the pines'
resin-dark? The time shall come
when the mountain turns again to gold
(desire that radiates from first models
and mothers). Carve these metaphors
to guard your time chatting in the bar,
among the irregular singing.
Fasten a grip on this hearth so both
may place our hand in the gold rivulet, so each
of us fishes out a raying nimbus.

Tray-Carrier of Laurels, Liam Miller

The star-eyes of books he elaborated
on a background he wanted remembered
steal down to us. Father of print,
he has gone away, and the tills will go on
wrangling; and the place with its green
walls, and white urinal, will stand.
Each night the barman will call time
in his bell tower. To attend his agenda
he could leave his family and duties
and I could resist a need to work. Even those
printed by him will be shredded.
He will sit alone on a bench without
the humour of a sentence out of Synge.
He will try to whisper through shut lips
to the beautiful pages he made on an
endless Baggot St. summer. He will imagine
a stage with kegs of porter like a picture book
of wings. Go, barter twilight for the first scene.

The Quarter

Rue Conti where Jim, Hank, I
lived on floor mattresses, boxes,
for \$135 a month. From the window
you could see the spire of the
Mortuary Chapel, read with the bell
of the French dead. Christ, we drank.

A house where Audubon completed
The Birds of North America and
The Little Club Playhouse
around the corner . . . Boys stood on
the right-hand side of the street,
girls on the left, for rent
before the plague, a real hot Calliope.

Mary, Mother of Acadians,
who makes contrary the wandering
waters the feet of Louisiana,
I remember your month of May
away from pining Mother in the
armchair, the sun outside her window.

Worship or memory? Memories.

August—the sodomised immigrant heat.

With such a Rue Bourbon hangover . . . The
flowering brick wall, red beans
and rice on Mondays, Matassa's after
the Clubhouse, living off
Jim, heat-days of shame, shine:
Butterflies on my lips before
they swing. I need light on
flowering bush, morning glories,
to see the hummingbird kiss that leaf!

I taught Cajuns and blacks at Delgado.
Audubon Park was a huge vaporous
field, heavy exhalations of soil and leaf
in the town that loves to party.

My birthday, Jim brought me the coffee
table book on Auden, such rained-on
wedding-cake photos. In Hooligan's
I sit at the same table: Killian's Red,
tears, the things of tears. "The end of destiny
and lived"—Our Lady waits outside
the Mortuary Chapel, a pillar of salt.

Scott Rautmann, Saturday Night

Place yes a silver and golden face
coaxing by a lake
the National Gallery of Screens and Masks
and then sweet mouths

Deal with broken in health and pocket
the lake is a mural
American and Irish ghosts gather

“These are religious kisses,” he says
these Saturdays of our lives

We are not told what writers do in heaven
surely they kiss three times at a time
maybe they play the piano
(though heaven is not the Gallery
of Pianos and Harps)
will the kids like it if it’s only classical?

God is saying polkas are nicer than rap
Jesus says to the soul trying to enter
did you step out of line?
If you didn’t how are you going
to cross this one?

The golden face intervenes
writers wearing sweaters
by the lake as it flows away silver

Saturday moon sees things at the right angle
shattered blond angels and daylong men

Hamlet is the Prince of Denmark
Jesus is the prince of death
Oscar Wilde is the prince of dance
Louise Bogan is the prince of duet
James Joyce is the prince of damp
(was the prince of darkness for a
moment on the dance card?)

Desperados what steps will we do?
immortal full in pocket

Kisses surely
by the lake with the little boat
Scott is approaching the religious ghosts

A White Thought in a White Shade

My poems are never tired
of these long walks in words
that take the turn to the park
to the Northern lights
railed-in-trees ice-sky
filtered with pink filaments
a punk snow dazed bleak pink
and creams that are fished out
twig-branch framed
of the lake's ice bucket
dark sounds of a saga passing
black lace with blue behind
a tablecloth out of nature
brain torches yelling out
flames and screams
the painter Bruce Pattison wears
a brown coat half a collar over a
sweater into tree-clouds
into invisible day-stars
poems are invisible day-stars
lain on the edge of the path
whitened leaves want to see them
they rise upon a garden
to low or no-bird dusking
seasonal waving of the clarity
of perfect transition
there can be no going no death
the Northern lights are that pure
so seeing they are god's eyes god's eyes
destinies perfect-shaped white
and we come to the transfiguration
Marilyn Monroe high her moon
absorbing all earth-ice
or a football-like moon kicked
sailing between tree-posts
berries expanding through cell walls
blood blown on snow cakes
above a yellow and white Virgin
of the Lighthouse fishes for texts
to tie together in a non-fade
to a white thought in a white shade . . .

Bruce at twilight did we look up
and see a man who climbed into a tree
and know him Zachary . . .
What supper can we have after Lake Park
but two sentences of scripture
on plates of grass and
leaves in the lighting-up apartment.

Postcard to Jimin in Manchuria

The first rule in writing postcards is:
include the names of four poets. The second:
don't make it sound like a poem by Robert Bly.
He thinks Yeats was a Lutheran. No evangelical
deep image, here. And name four places.

Postcards travel like confetti near the China
beaches. They blow into California, they come
into my hands like birds; like winter birds
who can warble anywhere. Our confetti comes
from China, as Wallace Stevens says; blowing
westwards like folk smoke. This morning your
card of Tiger Beach: is that its name or is it
a translation? Whichever, looking at it, it
has cliffs like Kilkee. This morning, my card
of cliffs to you that used to see as far as
New York, that now behold Cathay!

There are no trees on these heights to protect
birds—to find song you have to lift it out of
the sea. You set up on the sheer rock with

confetti made from spray and seal sound. The
folk warble of a wedding westwards to Tiger
Beach. My singing postcard: Anti-Evangelical
pro-sealing Fate.

— [signed] *James*

Orpheus as a Christian Scientist

I had the most lovely journey through life and death
I sat in a rolling double decker bus from the
funeral parlour-airport
through the early morning forming dark
that was tinging and tingling into dawn blue
out front of the bus a blue sea of new life

Everyone in the city under the age of forty-five
—wearing one shining earring
in this new world I saw all men were young
with the hearts of people like us
setting up long powerful love lives
and staying on top of everything in love with everything

no one making themselves corpse-like with drink as in Boston.

Patrick Kavanagh's Dublin

We travel through Dublin's wide streets bearing
white flowers to throw in bunches to our young friends
and sunrise hallos from forgiveness to our unknowing lovers
where roof-high breezes out of a green still
on the fields pour along our hands which clumsily confess
the faithfulness too deep for anything but walking.

To the Memory of Sylvia Plath: A Personal Note

By the customs on Baggot bridge
I enter my sad kingdom

of *Parsons* bookshop and the dozen bars,
buying a newspaper at this counter.

Alms for the journey
that I may sail safely between mortician and bishop.

To the after work pint then,
perhaps telephone him: the loneliness of the definable.

Arthur Guinness makes me tick before tea;
the sunflower look of the street pardons.

How five year olds redeem:
kneel for salvation when they frog-leap home from games,

so candle-eyed, exit of tunnels from silver hearts.
No stain-glass, real saints on pavements,

I'll state a new era of sincerity is beginning
of love in step with the pure—

Opera sky as if a friend was spotlighted near me,
on Kavanagh's canal behind the houses spring rite of swans—

I'll be reckless.

Homage to Conor Cruise O'Brien

Muriac, Green (Julian)
And others equally industrious
So pressing in their quest for God
Whom they could not find in Orthodoxy—
Thus, they concluded, He hides in sin
And went searching for Him there.
Illuminating their cerebral footnotes
On the techniques of soulwashing.

The Anglo-Saxons during this period?
Graham Greene stood on Brighton Rock
And Evelyn Waugh became a Handful of Rust.

THE DOCTOR'S HOUSE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY
(Salmon Publishing, 2004)

James Liddy

Kavanagh in Glory

On a cold day in Evanston, Illinois, Patrick Kavanagh became a prophet as he stood in the academic temple and uttered blasphemous phrases. His pose on the occasion of a symposium on “Poetry after Yeats” reflected a typical stance: that the artist appears in society from under the boughs of the tree of life: “In fact I would say the only people in America that are alive are men like Jack Kerouac. *On the Road* is an excellent book, one of my favourite books about America since Henry Miller’s *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare*, and I like Corso, Ferlinghetti, and Allen Ginsberg very much . . . I have made it my bedside book for several years . . .” After sportive visits to the grand bookshop, Hodges and Figgis, on Dawson Street, to buy another set of black and white City Lights books I adjusted to the siren note of the Apocalypse carried by the Beat Generation. I knew the mainstream family had faded like the Fourth of July; it was time for experiments with literary form, poetics, the idea of performance, as well as with libido in general.

The Beats pattered around like us in the twilight zone. Kavanagh was attracted to the outre—in a letter to his brother he refers admiringly to that “rascal” Allen Ginsberg. Under McDaid’s high ceiling we were in a San Francisco of our own union; in a duet between city and author, man and woman, or man and man, or woman and woman. Coincidentally Kavanagh declared his preference for London, “They don’t care who you are or who you’re with, they don’t ask questions, but mind you it is the same in ways as here, by the time you get to bed everyone is too drunk to take their clothes off.” We imagined a Camelot of chandeliers and scotch. We lived every day (day and night) in an enchanted poetry harem of McDaid’s. We were caught in a global poetry house-warming. Brian Higgins reminisced for a drink, “George Barker was in the company, perhaps he had been let off the string, he certainly was in no hurry to leave the pub. “Hey, George,” I shouted, “have a drink.” “Drop dead, filth,” was his reply, “stop, stop, you’re a beatnik.”

So, in a way, was the condition of the bardic order after they were thrown out by the gate lodge to the bothareen! They licked their wounds in public like Kavanagh and the Beats. There is an eerie quality of repetition here as evidenced by O Brudair's lines, "This vision in trembling death swoons ditched/clerks and poets, making them paranoid and hungry/lying in a rough bed, thinking of something terrible to say." For the Irish poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for Kavanagh, for Kerouac and Ginsberg, authentic homelessness might be a description of a joint diaspora. Each have another alibi with the future, their poems or poem-like writings are bathed with the chemistry of patrons, barflies, local characters, and implicitly with rival poets.

The Irish Renaissance and the San Francisco Renaissance share elements of antinomianism; the force of Kavanagh's poems agree with "ritual:" the sense that, unlike the Gospels, the moral law is not binding, faith in the prayers and works of love is sufficient for salvation, love you study with (put into liturgy) casts out puritan fear. The Beat writers brought something special to this, a gift described by Leslie Fielder as "the last, mad effervescence of the dreams of Utopian sex." The ideal of revolution against all revolutions, we ordered more pints as we didn't want to understand our world, we wanted to change it. We wanted to change ourselves into lovers, a thing never heard of in nationalist Ireland. The drinking hours were lengthened, weekends became festivals, the fleadh cheoils turned into Woodstocks. The emphasis was on song, kiss, and your kind of dance. Edna O'Brien's first novels offered an alternative sensibility, they included women in the liberation rituals. My ancestral East Clare, and Brian Merriman, come to mind: the intuition that love and sex should be amusing to the point of being funny, but often aren't.

Patrick Kavanagh led us through the Eisenhower/de Valera decade. In his later work his poetics are like Kerouac's or Spicer's or Wieners's: flighty, not always muted, possibly spontaneous possibly innocent, the law of trying to stay with the first draft. The last five poems of *Collected Poems*, edited by me first in *Arena*, were a burning out of his previous sound, a coming out from the closet of a lifetime's masked sincerity. Kavanagh was and is Beat primarily because his lines are concrete and immediate. "Never after-think to improve," the best is "the most painful, personal, rung-out, tossed-from-the-cradle, warm, protective mind." Tap yourself into the song of yourself. If with Yeats the elegiac heroics of Poe enters Irish literature via Mangan, then it is with Kitty Stobling that Whitman's "Song of Myself" lets loose in Dublin culture.

Mike Wallace asked Jack Kerouac, “This Beat Generation is a ‘seeking generation’. . . What are you looking for?” The response, “God, I want God to show me his face,” strikes me as similar to Kavanagh’s desire to find the same face in a cut-away bog. The muse of these writers’ is fun and fantasy but is also driven by malice and satire. Kavanagh’s poems are sheer textuality, the rendezvous description of experience, mimesis that the reader encounters on the pages of *Tristessa* or *Big Sur*. The sparkle of epiphany; if it sparkles, don’t reheat it. Kerouac said, “I have to make my choice between all this and the rattling trucks on the American road. I think I’ll chose the rattling trucks, where I don’t have to explain everything, and where nothing is explained, only real.” Kavanagh’s advice is robust too, “Write about what is in front of you, write about that pint on the table.” Kavanagh possessed the secret, he knew what to do to put yourself outside the establishment, “To be original and to have a comic attitude to life. What you would also want to say to put yourself outside is that Robert Graves and Marianne Moore are of no use.” Use, that is the clincher, though give me Moore and not Graves. If anything, Kavanagh is darker, more negative, than the Beats.

Legend made the Beats stars like the sparkler liturgies that those of us who dwelt in McDaid’s remember. Fame is a beautiful but devastating tune; my generation watched Kavanagh orchestrating that music, and we listened to those extraordinary songs coming from New York, San Francisco, Mexico City, Tangiers. Seduction is never a failure.

It all came back to me, on January 21 1982, in the Jazz Gallery in Riverwest, Milwaukee, when I meet Gregory Corso. “Paddy,” he said, “was very sharp. Kavanagh knew he was a poet so he could sit with whom he liked. Oh, he was a good poet. Him and Brian Higgins, poor fuckers, they made a mistake, they bit the dust but I’m alive. What a time we had in the Queen’s Elm, going to the owner’s house after hours. Those guys owned that man, I’m sure they never paid him, their credit was bigger than his bank account I’m sure.”

And I sat down and wrote what Corso had said, until he was taken off to the snake pit by my students, to Paddy’s widow and my friend, Katherine, in Rathgar. “Holy Barbarians,” instruct us from where you are, the starry heavens your beds.

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The Year of Love, San Francisco

I say goodbye to mother, father, Nora, Liam, Paddy, Miriam, MacDara and the rest. With the exception of the first three we are flower-children, at this moment tear-struck.

I enter the new world flying the polar route. An Australian sits beside me, repeating how great his country was. I am going, I said, to a place about which I have only a literary idea. I go slowly through immigration at Los Angeles and flew up to San Francisco. From the airport bus I stare out the window at the Beat streets. In the Beresford Hotel I unpack a little, ten p.m., the hour of sorties. Joe Gardiner, great Coolgreany publican, had recommended Harrington's at Jones and Market; he told me you have to say yes immediately in the U.S. if someone invites you to a drink. No Irish coaxing! This is the most valuable piece of advice I got.

On the first corner I stand a pioneer before the lights of Captain Bligh's Bounty. I sail into my first bar. Along the counter a mature white man sits on a bar stool, a younger black man beside him, this is repeated down the bar. The last slot is vacant, I order my first-across-the-ocean beer. What will be my fate?

Around the next corner the lights said: Harrington's, a big place. In the foyer reigns a signed photograph of Bobby Kennedy. A chieftain. An old man was moving the fiddle, I am asked the usual details on place and family. I prove myself a Milesian. The Irish Rovers play in the gallery. I realise I am the age of someone, 33.

The telephone lines crackle in the Beresford next morning. An old Limerick accent remembered my grandfather, Daniel Liddy, farmer and butcher, walking up the railway tracks at Kishiquirk to Mass. The next voice says Mary Conlin, a first cousin of my best medical pal Anthony Carroll-like to see Monterey and Big Sur? We drive in her sports car along the coast. Among the sights: a red-faced monsignor at a mission looking as if he is eating his breviary, a Canary Row bookshop where I buy George Moore in exile homage, Robinson Jeffers's house in what seems a sour beach glow. I see my first snake, shades of St. Patrick, and gulp my first screwdrivers at Nepenthe, the cliff house Orson Wells bought for Rita Hayworth as a wedding present. I piss against my first redwood tree. In this fashion I set myself to conquer California.

Frisco, brilliant, seducing, a breezy cauldron; I feel surprisingly “in,” everyone good humored, travellers checks cashed in a second. Spanish architecture, Spanish radio, this is a second Dublin for me like Palma. Flower children in profusion, but people say the scene is moving out to rural parts.

To the campus of San Francisco State, just a few acres. Rebellion brews. Someone tells me there is an area reserved for dope-smoking behind the cafeteria, a nude-in is taking place on the lawn. Helen Pettit in the English Department hands me a key to my office down the corridor from Business professors. I have a neighbor at the other desk who introduces himself as Nic Kubly. He tells me he is a writer from Wisconsin who has received the National Book Award for non-fiction. He invites me for cocktails to his house in Waller Street; by the time I arrive from downtown into Haight Ashbury’s dreamland he has talked to the English born owner next door and I have a basement flat. It is a condemned habitation and I want to be a condemned writer. I whoopee into the night because I have landed at last.

You go around to the back of the house which dates from 1870 and up some rickety steps to a big front room. A sink with hot water, presses, fridge, gas cooker, a table, a couch I have made out of two mattresses with the help of a yellow blanket. Tony Kerrigan told me in St. Patrick’s in Dublin yellow is the color of madness and, Jesus, I have my theme! The second room is almost as big, bed, wardrobe, pigeon-hole Victorian desk. Then a shower. My house half a mile from Golden Gate Park, for \$65 a month including electricity and gas. I celebrate by walking up Haight Street: a bearded man has a reefer and waves it in front of a crowd who are down on their knees begging for a smoke.

Nic Kubly drops by but usually stays for only three drinks. He expects me to visit him for a cocktail at the happy hour, from his window you can see the Bay Bridge and Oakland He is writing his big Greek book which is a mixture of fact and fiction; knowing all Irish people are expert professors of history, he inquires about Elizabeth of Austria-Hungary, “Sissi.” He is on the Corfu section and he has her in the palace with her maid combing her hair and suddenly the beautiful woman shrieks, one hair is grey. Kubly is what I’ve admired, an intimate teller of tales. He is in conflict with Joyce-confidant Kay Boyle; she got him the job at State and wanted him to live in her house on Frederick Street and when he refused an academic war ensued. Another creative writing colleague Bill Wiegand tells me.”we don’t give tenure to journalists.” That’s the

Time/Life label against Nic who was music critic of the first, did the Italy book for the second.

Kubly's talk takes its swim to the New York bathhouses of the early 40's, the golden closet era, names drop from inner space to intimate space: Bernstein, Brando, Spender whose cock was "as big as a coffee can." Nic has brought back from his last time in Greece a boy who is being educated near the farm in Wisconsin; he will appear at Christmas and I will meet him. At the urging of Wisconsin senators Nelson and Proxmire, Alex has been made a citizen by an act of Congress. Nic proudly shows the LBJ pen. There was another Greek boy before but he ran off with a Chinese girl. I go back and sit on my wobbly wooden steps and look at the cherry trees in the yard. The butterfly helmets are flying around.

I am up next day to meet Clay Putnam, the coordinator of Creative Writing, who invites me to lunch in the faculty cafeteria. When we take our trays to the cashier. I am shocked-he does not pay. The U.S. is run by the Dutch. Putnam says, "We've just had Denise Levertov. She's a Londoner. I'm comfortable with people from London." Prologue. What is the semester like: cars drawing to the door with destination Pacific Heights or wherever, the talk may be in Yiddish, Karl Shapiro and friends can blast at radio-immortal Ezra Pound. Or Shirley Kaufman says, "Moshe Dayan sat in that chair last week," as her older husband adds, "I was a student of Dr. Freud. Do you know what he said to us students in Vienna one morning, 'People are divided into two groups, those who had books in their houses in their childhood, and those who had not.'" It seems a prologue to the new flower children of the world, flowers with lesson plans.

Mark Linenthal, the director of the Poetry Center, a new friend. He, and his wife Frances, see a psychiatrist first thing in the morning, Mark boasts he spends more than his professor's salary on the sessions. Wednesday afternoon after the Center's reading there shines the dream of unlimited booze, professors do not stock fridges with beer. The poets come marching through, in a few diamond months I get to know the bards of the 60's. Jim Wright is the Irish-style maestro, a Montague depth-charged; Wright is bard personified in his reciting and singing, he recites for me Pearse and MacDonagh the lords of the 1916 rising from memory. Ed. Field got his audience rocking with laughter at his reading (during which I take my private Nobel Prize out of my pocket and hand it to him); Jim Chapson, who comes into my office because I sit on his Master's Committee, catches my eye and we start laughing.

At his reading George Stanley becomes a friend. A slight, rather clerical, figure puts a statement on the chairs in the room. I pick it up and find it impressive. "I was born in San Francisco, January 7, 1934. So far, my education has been to read, write, and rationalise at St. Ignatius High School and U.C. Berkeley, and of gradually and painfully learning, at least once in a while, to stop rationalising and answer life more directly, this through further reading, conversations with Jack Spicer, Louis Zukovsky, and many others, friendship, love, and hints of the great laws of humility and empathy against which I so often rebel . . . I love San Francisco and feel responsible for her. In addition to poet I accept the following identifications: homosexual, Catholic, and radical." Robert Duncan leads the clapping at the end of each poem. After it is over, two young men patiently wait to talk to George, they tell me they are from Milwaukee. George sees them and says to Frances, "Invite them." Frances, "Those girls over there?" "Oh, Frances, don't be so stupid." But I don't remember Antler and Jeff at the party.

The other track is Thursday to Tuesday. Kubly tells me the houses at the top of the street are known as "The Swish Alps." Beyond them is Buena Vista Park, not quite as remarkable in song and story as Golden Gate, but still. Kubly takes me on a drive up there. On the summit a line of men are walking in a narrow circle, concentrating in dead silence. Two break away and I watch a car speeding down the twists and turns of the descent. Is it a movie scene I've watched?

Sunday, Kubly looks in at noon, back from an Episcopal Mass. A student from Kentucky, David Polk, and his wife come for advice on a book of poems. Mary Conlin turns up; all of this is Sabbath day gin drinking! To end the cycle, Kubly, a young faculty member Brogan, and I hit the Haight Street bars. We start in the Studio where the girls pack pistols to keep off the men . . . I must mention Mary Conlin and I dashed out in the afternoon for a stroll in Golden Gate: the bushes were moving with what seemed love, Buddhist monks danced and clashed their cymbals, the Phoenix Park is a poor cousin.

Beaches are only a short distance away. I have discovered the "J" car that goes out beyond the University of California hospital to a stretch of sand with debris, some wood, shy short waves on a pier. A bar is open right on the edge of the sandhills; large murals of the city's history decorate its walls, a contribution of the W.P.A. Workmen-mermen-barmen not far from the water's edge. I am told this beach became the paradise for the most convincing because the most conversational of poets, a paradise with a transistor held to his ear. Baseball scores had

a background of waves for Jack Spicer. He was also the most controversial of poets. Another landscape was lying in Golden Gate Park, a radio swinging from a tree above his head.

In one of my writing classes there are a number of Black Panthers headed by a minister in their government, George Murray. They bring armed body guards and the College wants to know if I want cops in the classroom. Most of their writing efforts involve the word "Honky," I compare their effusions to Irish rebel poems. The campus slowly explodes, in endless faculty debate, specially the R.O.T.C. controversy; I find it impossible to vote with conservatives but part of me is inclined to harken to the cautious (nonforgotten wise words) of Clay Putnam. Politics looks worse on television I note, as I see the campus rallies on Kubly's set.

Tallyrand is the greatest sugar daddy, life just before the revolution is sweet. Ron drifts through in mail uniform, upsets his wife by not returning home at night. David is younger, we quiver in our chairs when we talk about poetry, then we quiver like Venus's arrows, he makes a terrible face and blackeyes me. Stars do a Salomé dance. He arrives next afternoon and tells me he is getting married in February. Jim is a mystic (and a Cromwellian like me), he is so intense he can not talk much. He sits in my office with his folder of poems, waiting for a new universe. Revolution and inclination mean classes in students' houses and specially in my basement, alcohol permitted during course period, no marijuana until it is over. At Hallowe'en we stay on till 4 a.m., blasted and participants in a delicious reading of Williams's "Asphodel, That Greeny Flower" in some kitchen. Spicer's "Billy The Kid" a wilder and wilier poem follows.

I call the apartment Grail Castle or the Spaceship, one is flying over the Bay, one over the cosmos. After the Cavafy reading for Greek Independence Day I invite everyone back to the Spaceship. Only Jameson ten is served. Duncan appreciates this but leaves early. George and Jim become friendly and double up in laughter; some souls imbibe whiskey for the first time, and it is still daylight My student Frank totals his car as he drives away and has to get stitches in his face. At the party he tells me he is a Norbertine priest from Green Bay, Wisconsin, gay, and wishes to make me a mouth-watering vegetarian dinner (later he invites me to Mass in some suburb, and substitutes my name for Jesus Christ in the Canon, I flee out the door). I persist in going out with the group left; we hie to The Pioneer (not the same meaning in both cultures) on Van Ness presided over by Enda Bartley, from Ballyjamesduff. He gives

me the address of a man he says I'd like, George Gleeson, ex-member of Limerick County Council, who "wore the Blue Shirt." The Irish Consul sits on the jukebox and buys us a drink, his toast "To the local maidens and lads."

What are we but pub tribes? Harrington's, McCarthy's on Market Street, The Jug of Punch on Mission Street (music on Sundays), The Abbey on Geary Boulevard (music on Saturdays), and back home Terry's on Haight Street: full of cops after Paddy Wagon trips snaring hippies; some nights I can sneak underage students in and the cops are friendly; the bartenders are from Dingle and have the G.A.A. scores. Sundays the hippies block the street in early evening, cops on horseback intervene, the people's Sabbath protest against Capitalist traffic is led by one Charlie Manson who also came to my reading at the I-Thou café.

I saunter with Nic Kubly through Golden Gate Park, a massive scene of hippies, love-babies, flower children; the Grateful Dead had been playing in the Panhandle, ensconced in Diggers. We get to the museum, I pause at drawings by Jean Cocteau, there is a sexy one of Spender called "Stephen." We drink jasmine tea in the garden, Kubly tells me the Greek book is winding down. Campus talk, President Summerskill has resigned from a pay phone at the airport, the Black student newspaper has been raided. The Panthers in my class have disappeared. Barbed wire appears around the campus. politics seems a class of earthquake that spills at intervals over talkative hermetic cells . I tell Nic the story of our colleague, Bill Dickey the poet, who murmurs beside me on the street car going home, "Do you know what my favorite century is, the 18th century."

Tom Hill drives me and Jim out past the Golden Gate Bridge, over steep twisty roads, to Stinson Beach. The beach spreads its arms like my home sand of Kilkee. Spicer and Duncan used to deckchair here, the first drank the second never rested (Duncan typed Billy the Kid). Tom's photographer friend dances around in a purple pants; after his camera stops swinging in the wind we recite a little Spicer:Its beaches we've starved on. Or loved on . . .

It roars at me like
love. And
Its sands wet with the new tide.
Automatic

Only, for Christ's sake, surf.I step into the cave of the White Rabbit. This rabbit is never what you expect, there have been many resplendent

and fragmentary disguises: here a droll Scotsman californiated into verse's turf and surf. Graham Mackintosh, hero of West Coast chronicles of poetry, White Rabbit publisher, Black Sparrow printer, co-maker of Spicer's books. He presides over a giant Natoma Street print den where cushions are strewn on the floor; men drink, women smoke dope. There are children around, I am afraid of sitting on one.

Graham is bringing out John Allen Ryan's second book, he is a major ex of Ginsberg's though he refuses to talk about him. John, erstwhile bartender at The Place, keeps the most comprehensive literary journal, in five sections across the page. He is dead leaving a pub, after we leave Gino's and Carlo's he propositions each young man on the street, yelling like a siren. I wander off a bit, some of these guys look virile. John's proudest bar boast is "My eight Irish great grandparents were all Protestants." How can I drink to that?

Richard Brautigan is a silent presence on Natoma Street, tall and spiry; he is part of Graham's lark, White Rabbit has brought out his *Please Plant This Book*, seed packets in a folder: squash, parsley, lettuce, carrots, others, and native California flowers. The announcement says, "This book is free, permission is granted to reprint this book by anyone as long as it is not sold." The project carries the twist of the publisher's mind, a menu of fine printing, surrealism, Celtic capriciousness. Brautigan is beginning to sell, he's just out in German, he collects WWII machine guns and rifles.

Jim, Graham, and I often retreat to the bar on the corner of Natoma and Howard where Graham can make his disquisitions, "State is nothing, it all happens at Cal. You get independent opinion there . . . Do you know the poet and the poem Spicer liked best in the language . . . Edward Lear the greatest poem was "The Jumblies." The phone on the wall starts ringing, I do the McDaid's thing and answer. The blackswatered barman yells, "Drop it, faggot, can't you mind your fucking business, keep your nose clean or you'll be out of here." I suggest withdrawal and we arrive in Gino's and Carlo's, green walls, pool table in back, the best literary graffiti I've seen and on the stools Charles McCabe *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist and Pierre Salinger's ex-wife. The jukebox that Spicer pushed cut-up matchboxes into to shut off the Beatles. I get the impression glasses may fly at any moment.

Back at the campus, we are having a community of poets reading for Marin County high school kids at the Poetry Center. Us poets sit in a circle, I am beside Jo Miles in a wheel chair, George Stanley on my other

side. As Linenthal introduces the occasion, Black militants filter in; Linenthal explains these kids have come a long way to hear poetry. The intruders whistle eerily, their leader plays with the microphone, "The campus is closed." I wonder how George and I are going to manage Jo Miles. Brautigan gets up and says, "These guys have a cause, let's allow them to do what they want to do, we should agree with their wishes and leave." About half the circle gets up and goes, including Duncan. George stays, and Jo is still beside me when we see The National Guard in the back of the gallery. We proceed with our reading, maybe a poet among the kids will remember this day.

Graham starts talking about a book; he wants me to edit an anthology of Californian poetry, I write to a crowd including Bukowski who writes back and sends me signed copies of two books (the only poet to refuse is Richard Duerden). Some are chagrined at this move; James Schevill my colleague refers with horror to Spicer's hornet letters stored at the Center. He and his friends call the Spicer/Duncan group "The North Beach Hominterm." I am interrupted by graver news, a telegram from my sister tells me Kavanagh is dead. I phone Tony Cronin in Missoula and send a telegram and letter to Katherine Kavanagh. Paddy makes *The San Francisco Chronicle*, "For 30 years Kavanagh held court on the Irish literary scene, usually from a bar stool." I go down to Market Street to get a New York Times, the obituary's sub-heading reads, "Eccentricity said to have overshadowed his talents as a writer." My captain is dead though I am among the captains and the kings.

Kubly begins talking about another writer I hold close who has died, Carson McCullers who visited Galway just before I left, endearing photos of her and John Huston at her bedside were in the press. Death takes angel-writers to heaven. "When I was at Yaddo I came down to breakfast and as I crossed the yard to the dining room he hear a wailing like a dog confined somewhere . . . the fountain in the yard contained a bundled-up McCullers who shortly is packed off into an ambulance."

Kubly takes me to dinner to a wealthy friend with a Swedish writer-wife. George Hornstein begins with de Valera and stays on Israel. George is a produce king and he says California will not be growing vegetables in 20 years He presents us with a gold bottle opener and a penknife for cutting whiskey tops. There is an aside-I mention that Dan Reeves the owner of the Los Angeles Rams is my mother's first cousin. George knows him well and grins, "He doesn't remind me of you at all, he doesn't like poetry. Dan Reeves only likes horses and women . . ."

The world began with a book, Genesis, Gilgamesh, this world ends with one. Graham takes an interest in a triptych of poems Tom Hill, Jim and I put together. We call it *Blue House* after a phrase of Tu Fu; drifters in houses of merriment though what we really mean is the golden shifting foreign haze we live in, that delights us, Ron Mackintosh takes photos of us as we lean against the Natoma wall with cans of Miller in our hands (pointing to the future?). Graham prints an invitation: a proclamation on dark blue paper of wining and dining in a Blue House, 574 Natoma Street, with the injunctions, “Wear your masks, bean curd will be served (soft and hard) . . . (No poems will be served), No poets will be served.”

Of course poems keep on being served.

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Introduction to Wisconsin

I was brought up in a great literary country, less than the size of Wisconsin with less population and an equal number of taverns, that has produced -can I say-innumerable fiction writers and poets as well as four Nobel prize winners. I was blessed with literary memory when I began reading, something I see as partially absent from my students’ days and nights. The best of them make up this deficiency; Wisconsin can shine with writers. Some souls are touched with a muse wand in my UWM workshops. The teacher’s function is to shove and embellish the musepower’s golden proposals and to expand the memory of tradition. After arriving 25 years ago, I perceived Wisconsin too as a field full of writing folk. When I meet them I lift my champagne glass lakewards.

I was brought to Wisconsin by a New Glarus writer who was my office mate in the late 60’s at San Francisco State. I would like to pay tribute to him now: Herbert Kubly was my first American friend; he was that now somewhat unrecognisable type the writer persecuted by McCarthy who lost his passport and gained his soul. The heartland farmer, the mid-west artificer of truth. He was a traveller whose journeys were part of his autobiography. His work I like best is *An American in Italy*; he won the National Book Award with it when there were few categories. Friendship is many drinks and meals and drinks. He died in 1996, I offer him Catholic prayers, may the New Glarus air be Swiss and Franciscan.

A great awakening in Wisconsin has been Lorine Niedecker and Black Hawk island. This locus of genius has brought me again to the sense of the druid religion: sacred place. By her river she reminds me of Yeats in his tower at Ballylee on a stream. Lonely and Zukofsky-spurned, her "Paeon to Place" is probably more considerable than "The Wild Swans at Coole." A great poet in your own country is the marker of tradition.

Milwaukee is a city of several poets, the first is the very beautiful personal lyricist, Horace Gregory, one of the immortal backroom presences in American literature, as an editor. I can dwell in a city described by him as, "Gather, foregather/in the pale mist of Juneau's city:/Below it flows the thin Menominee/Where forests were: clay-banked the silver river,/The trail in memory across the plain./ . . . And from grey roots, the lilac flowering/In tombs that open when remembered spring/Comes home again beneath a tall roof-tree." Milwaukee somehow holds ancestral seeds; Gregory's grandfather, first city engineer, graduated in Dublin and claimed Lady Gregory as cousin. A faint air of Coole blows in Lake Park, the German socialists were landlords here so there should be more swans, and if not this plumage more boats and lovers. People can concentrate around, sail on lakes and rivers.

Just this semester a young poet in my class Zach Pieper handed me some lines that reignite his home town, Mayville, "Forgive me, I am singing myself to sleep/bathtubs and saints, all planted upsidedown in the backyard/Blessed is the name of the forgetful,/those thoughtful old men with long walks to take./Those children who can never hurry home/ . . . they are kissing the traintracks they are singing in their sleep."

"By an inland ocean," let us keep singing on the deck in the bad days, the good days, the long nights, the first window blue, first thirst.

No temporary spray of hymns.

Milwaukee Diaspora

God shift all here!

Not to be self-important or anything, but I am not a nomad though I have been seized since adolescence with a longing to live somewhere else, in a city of poets and young men, a city with a history like Cavafy's and cafes like Saba's. When I was young, I wished it to be a Spanish

speaking place, parks and railway stations open all night. I practised the art of invisibility in Madrid, Valladolid, Cordoba, Santiago de Compostela, Zamora. I became an emigrant, an exile, a disappearing act, and an object on the horizon in 1967 when I abandoned Dublin. I came out of a literary and alcoholic culture at its most swan-songish and worked in a succession of North American cities-San Francisco, Portland, New Orleans, and Milwaukee. The first of these drank as much as Dublin and had as many loud and strong poets but not the same quality of bars except for North Beach, while Milwaukee suggests Dublin without the same quantity of poets but with the bars. New Orleans was the giant tropical metropolis where it gleamed so warm and sensual I could not see the poets but the jam-packed bars went twenty-four hours and so did I.

I have been in Wisconsin since 1976 and sometimes on rainy days my new city reminds me of my old, though not as much as The Loop in Chicago which holds Irish faces in the downpour. Milwaukee can strike me as being as stodgy and melancholy as Grafton Street in 1955; it is not as stodgy as the provincial German or Polish city from whose ashes it arises. But Grafton Street was never, not even now, as American and erotic as Milwaukee's East Side; an artificial paradise of desire, a little Berlin of the twenties at least in the head. Close is some hours later; and as I stand in the music of the last call I am the same writer I would have been in Dublin yet I get the impression my stance is more energetic, concentrated on body and soul.

I am an exile, I am not an exile. "Exile" has enough alienation in it to be a real condition yet it can be read as part of the flashy itinerant supernaturalism of the voyageur. The spirit wandereth whence it is employed or patroned. The artist type is outside the first social force of Mammy and friends; distance beckons new interruptions, and maybe memory spins into backlash.

Writing can seem the activity of alcoholic and workaholic ghosts; the famous never tired ones, Wilde, Auden, Isherwood used new domicile and flirtatious café in a more exuberant mode than they would at home. Do not dismiss the soldiering in far foreign fields where the battle cry is: do not tire.

The books on the table are piled-up differently: if I had stayed would my life have been changed by John Wieners, Lorine Niedecker, and above all Jack Spicer? Sitting by a great lake stung by the idea: your Ireland is dead, clarify your mind.

We swam like high-powered fish out of Modernism and we needed the ambivalences of travel. Fragmentation and change are stamped on our passports. Travel through loose twilight zones. Do I ever rework the Joycean formula: did I ever leave? Can one ever leave the pre-Vatican 11 church? You can see the spire from your window. Montague's quote, in my gilded McDaid's youth, out of Cavafy which moved me so much: you age in the same city, your hair eventually whitens in the same street. Images of the past, crowded dream returns.

Yet there is no substitute for being in a new country with a clear mind, and friends from a different tribe. New starlets.

O prodigal, the home place is closed!