

Birds in November

SAMPLER

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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SAMPLER

Daragh Breen

Birds in November

SAMPLE

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Colin, Gerry & Evan

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*A sea bird hovers
about two feet above
the last slip of water
that divides the whole length
of the mud-slacked estuary
reading the Morse code
of its eye movements
reflected
in the silent water
as it asks its own ghost
what death is like.*

*And then
directly in its wake
the water's surface
is unzipped and ebbes
as it lowers its webbed feet
before the hull of its torso
comes to rest on its dead-self,
enabling its disparate selves
to dis-remember which was
life and which was death,
floating in this Purgatory of mud.*

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Navigation

*Having had impure thoughts,
Brendan takes to the seas in search of purity.*

His fasting ears still
sizzling with the static
of the quayside Tannoy speakers,
the soaked bunting slapping
against the ground
where it has fallen,
the distant echo of
a U-Boat's whale song
as it splashes back
from the chest of a currach,
a tarred claw being
passed from wave to wave,
its occupants churning
their long straight oars,
grasping for leverage amid
all the noise as they call
to Brendan to come save them.

Having been kept awake all night by the torrential rain on his tarpaulin, Brendan has a vivid memory.

In the rain-light of childhood,
memory mottled as a trout,
the fishermen of galaxies' spoils
have come ashore,
their mouths Sheila-na-gigging
on the dead sea of the ice.

On the neighbouring stall,
a fatty-padded pair of trotters
are laid out on the silver platter
of the market stall tray,
one limply and slightly layered
over the other,
like the Christ's feet
nailed and fastened to the Cross.

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Having fallen overboard, Brendan glimpses Paradise.

Edenic, amongst the white underwater bonfires
of the ice-floes, a Narwhal carries the frozen
frond that flowered and then stalled when
it first entered these icy, forgotten waters.

Having spent centuries giving birth to
flying horses, it took its secret to the
Northern curve of the unknown world
to escape the funeral cortege of its species

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*Having reached the zenith of the unknown world,
Brendan has a revelation.*

Deemed to have been
Unholy and damned
as the pupil of the Arctic
refused to tilt
to face the sun
in the only account that
he could find of its
purported existence,
Brendan, perched in his
hides of horses,
had come to sing its lament,
but glancing at it all
through a pair of whale-bone
sunglasses, he simply
bowed his head in silence.

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Having deployed a hydrophone beneath the ice-fields, Brendan waits for its songs.

When a chrome hydrophone was left dangling
like a fishing lure throughout the day-less nights,
the voice of the ice-fields humming their own lament
was finally heard, as something seemed to have finally
broken deep within.

A Connemara pony, ballasted by the black-marble
of its hooves, stood stationary for days and nights on
end as it listened to the processional march of its song
enveloped by the North winds carrying it South,
buoyed by the passing Gulf Stream.

Bourne by beasts of burden, their hooves shod with moss,
the bell of the moon, no longer strapped silent in its great square
oak frame, was carried down the dark trails of the coast,
the snow blossoming pink in its wake, as Spring moved in the
wrong direction, gathering its way South.

Having been all-at-sea, Brendan returns home.

Hunger spored in the damp air
leaving behind mushroom gills of village walls,
the bell that once called the fish ashore
having rotted away along with the thatch,

the wind taunts the shoreline
with an intensity that suggests that if it
were to suddenly stop, and all was shocked still,
then every single thing would disappear.

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*rising out of the river
an exploding hull of
two dozen or so seagulls
disintegrates into the air*

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