

Waking

Mary O'Donnell

These mornings
as you make your peace with final days of work,
you bend over my pillow, kiss me.
I, bleary-faced, swim in the blue of your eyes,
could be that new bride, the one
you imagined you'd married, the treasure
you risked your life to bring back
to shore from some foreign place,
to spend time with on days
I thought would never come.

Your dream of me, my vision of you,
peculiarly jumping land and ship.
Now we are here, amazed by buoyancy and roots,
ship and shore there for our taking.
The shore is wilder than you thought,
a dancing garment woven during your absence,
imprinted with words, my monkish work
from the heart's scriptorium.

But journeys did not part us,
nor working contradictions of our tuning.
That jangle gave some purchase to the task.
Anharmonic, opposites, lured as Sirens lured
the strapped Odysseus, the difference being
that our earth tilted slightly, currents changed,
and we were pulled to one another,
lovers with no laurels, home.
It has taken so long to get here. Wake now.
Wake to new doing, to new pauses in new days.

I cannot sleep for the joy of it.
Nights sparkle, Catherine Wheels spatter light

as much as a shimmering dawn in the Aegean
once stirred the eyes of the man who travelled,
only to return to Ithaca.

An Irish Lexicon

Mary O'Donnell

(A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, L, M, N, O, P, R, S, T, U)¹

Twilight, and the deer are grazing in the Phoenix Park.
Someone dreams of Arkle, Beara, Drumlins, Errigal.
A poet writes of Dubh Linn, Lonndubh, Belfast,

Glens of Imal, Antrim, The Downs,
Devil's Bit, Vinegar Hill, The Hook, Bannow,
Ships, helmets, Ogham, Newgrange,

Dawn chorus, dawn light, grave passages,
Burren limestone, dolmen, capstone, and Dowth.
In school they speak of Flight, Grammar, Imram,

Lir, Marian, Naoise, Oriel, in the Dáil it's Partnership,
Rights, salmon, Taoiseach/Toscairí.
Sea fog and frost are rolling in. Land holds its breath.

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The SOMEONE, the TEACHER, the POET,
the POLITICIAN weave a dialogue of badger-bait,
bull-bait, dog-fight, and greyhound,
Cú, Cuchullán, Dun Dealgán, Eamhain Macha,
Tháinig long ó Valparaiso, tá tír na n-óg
Ag cúl an tí, tír alainn trína céile,
Mise Éire, Micheál Ó Súilleabhán,

¹ The Irish language alphabet has only 18 letters.