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# Sunderings

This issue of *Tinteán* foregrounds the literary to an unusual degree. We publish for the first time Philip Harvey's prize-winning poem, 'Definition', which the Jageurs Literary Award judges found to be an eloquently understated poem about the issue of Irish identity in the diaspora. It is an issue that keeps demanding to be renegotiated.

We also are delighted to welcome Evelyn Conlon, a much admired Irish short-story writer and novelist (*Stars in the Daytime* 1990, *A Glassful of Letters* 1998, *Skin of Dreams* 2003) to the stable of *Tinteán* writers. She has many threads of connection to Australia, having backpacked here in her youth and returned often. She will be back again in July with a long list of speaking engagements, another novel and book of short stories in gestation. The story we are publishing in this issue is a foretaste.

The grief of loss is the threnody that runs through both pieces and indeed through much Irish literature – one thinks of the great set-pieces of the Gaelic Irish tradition – the laments for Art O'Leary, 'The Hag of Beare', Mangan's translation of O'Hussey's Ode to the Maguire, or in more comic mode, Flann O'Brien's hilarious lament for the loss of his language in *The Poor Mouth*. So entrenched is the tradition of lament in Irish letters, that sweet Celtic melancholy was deemed by Matthew Arnold, the English poet of the mid-nineteenth century, to be the hallmark of 'the' Celtic sensibility. He, of course, was setting his own nationalist agendas whereby Englishness was defined in contradistinction to Irishness: English grit, masculinity and rationality were weighed in the balance – to the disservice of 'Irishness' – with melancholy, femininity and emotionalism.

Communications have so changed the modern world that migration must be a very different experience in the 21st century from the 19th. I'm reminded of David Fitzpatrick's compelling analyses in *Oceans of Consolation* of 111 letters exchanged between Irish emigrants and their families in Ireland between 1843 and 1906. These are ordinary, everyday letters, from people who never expected to see one another again, who were not wealthy or well-educated, and indeed sometimes barely literate. What strikes one is how ritualistic and formulaic they can be and one wonders how much force of personality is dampened by the difficulties of an unfamiliar medium, and how the relationships could possibly be sustained by such exchanges. To cite the one that gave Fitzpatrick the title of his book:

My dear Father,

I am to inform you that I received you welcomed letter on the 25th. March dated January the 1st.55 which gave me and my Sister an ocean of consolation to hear that you my Stepmother Brothers and Sisters are in good health thank God. As for my uncles and Aunts [erased: you never mentioned a word about them but] I hope they are in good health too – at Same time, this leaves us in a perfect State of health thanks be to our Blessed Redeemer for his goodness towards us.

One is heart-scalded by the emotional poverty of this utterance – its poignant overstatement in its one poetic (overblown?) moment, its barely suppressed anger at not being told things that matter, its perhaps unconscious discriminations in capitalising some affiliations and not others. One

hopes that Father loved his children enough for these deficits to be unnoticed and the letter relished for what it was: despite its empty, content-free gestures and inadequacies, it remains a deeply sincere attempt to reassure him about a loyal and ongoing filial orientation.

Conlon's short story brings separation across oceans into a new era. What Fitzpatrick's letter writer could not have was telephone contact, or Skype, with their additional emotional freight of readable voices and non-verbal excitability; and with the immediacy of texts and emails. In an age of cheap and easy communications, there is no remedy if an adult party refuses to return the ball of conversation.

Conlon's is not specifically a story of migration, of course, and it demonstrates painfully (and at times a tad comically) that distance can exist not just between oceans, but also in the short distance between kitchen and turnip beds, and be figured by silences beyond language. The errant husband cannot verbalise the three-month hiatus, and the wife is content to occupy the high ground of her virtue and discount her regime of coping, her tear-filled crossings of all the Dublin bridges; the bold-as-brass sister has no compunction in dropping out of a life for 12 months and casually resuming her relationship without adverting to the lost year. The wife and sister bear her heartbreak, her laceration alone, not quite sure of its justification. When does an absence and a lapse in communication become a breach in the relationship? How does one heal from the failure of trust?

It is a cliché of film that the rich émigré who returns to show off their acquired (usually in the USA) wealth is resented. Conlon's short story prompted me to wonder whether in literary accounts of migration there was, sitting uneasily alongside that melancholy, a thread of rage? Perhaps for the conditions that forced the removal? Perhaps for the unequal impacts on individuals in the same family, who might be expected to bear it in similar ways? Perhaps, as this story suggests, the rage is self-loathing for lacking a sense of adventure, lacking the courage to make the move? Rage can be impotent, but it can also empower.

As Australian readers, we can enjoy, even giggle at, the exotic-sounding *Wollongong*, knowing it to refer to a pristine, exquisitely beautiful piece of coastline that has been scarred irretrievably by industrialisation. Not the most exciting tourist destination Downunder. We are well placed to catch both the hint of fear that the sister may have been caught out in her high-handed and defensive mysteriousness, but also that the stay-at-home may have her own guilty secrets as she takes up her position on the high ground she can now comically but uncomfortably occupy. What she wants more than anything is intimacy, but it seems oceans removed from her.

Distance in the 21st century is a state of mind, but is it any easier to negotiate than the impediments of inarticulateness with which the 1855 letter-writer was burdened? 'Ceremonies of communication', the elaborate and sometimes empty courtesies of the past, and the tribal imperatives of another era, might not fully answer contemporary needs, but there is much to be said in favour of such rituals as gestures of goodwill and an intention to reciprocate.

Frances Devlin-Glass

The Elemental Sundering was a 5000 years long battle, fought between elementals at the core of Azeroth. It was during this battle that the Firelord, Ragnaros, would seek to consume Thunderaan, Prince of Air. The Lieutenants of Ragnaros, Geddon and Garr, perpetrated the betrayal against Thunderaan, who was caught unaware. The Firelord's advances were wholly unknown to Thunderaan, and before he could react, Sulfuras, legendary hammer of Ragnaros, struck an unmerciful blow, and Thunderaan fell, utterly Landscape of Sunder Nursery, Sunder Nursery is a 16th-century heritage garden complex adjacent to the Humayun's Tomb, built in 1569-70. a UNESCO World Heritage site in Delhi, India. A. By Azhar\_khan. Related keywords. architecture asia beautiful blooming flowers building cathedral city culture decoration dome exterior garden gardening historical history landmark landscape monument nature old outdoor parhway park religion sky spring stone summer tourism travel. Categories: Buildings/Landmarks, Parks/Outdoor. Editorial Illustration. Environmental Concept Art & Design. Fan Art. Fantasy. Fashion & Costume Design. Game Art. Gameplay & Level Design. Sundered - Eshe. Cole Berger. "SUNDERER" Recoilless Rifle. Joshua T. Rithera, the Sundered Lands. Foreign Worlds Cartography. Alerion. Matthew Norman. Sundered Sky.