

MEDIUM

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For further reading, try my regularly updated blog at www.lordanslit.com or access my CV and much of my back catalogue

You will also find me on Bandcamp, Spotify, Apple Music, Youtube, Facebook, Instagram.

I work as poetry editor and mentor - if you are an emerging poet and would like me to help with your work, email me at dlordan@hotmail.com. School and community workshops also available.

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MEDIUM

THE MAN WITH NO MASK

When, followin the big win - the real biggie-
uncountable zeros after his name -
he stands his friends an endless reservoir of stout
and decrees every church
a twenty-four-hour shebeen

abolishes retchin and reflux and coughs
plugs the ancient flow of anal bleeding
decrees the removal of sleep from the brain
and promises the people that none
need ever stop drinkin and smokin and snortin
and gamblin and chompin ever again.

Ten-million-year weekend begins.
The paralytic age.
Then. Something mighty
cracks in the head of the Chieftain of Chiefs,
an unquenchable surgin of rage through the blood
that cometary rage at bein
not the only God

and off he goes to war against the world
grindin armies to dust
drownin archipelagos
hurlin mountains into the sun

New York falls to him
and then the whole of Scotland
then Bangkok, Bhutan, Yakutsk.

Finalé – his incredible one-man stampede,
two legs tied behind, routin
Skibbereen and Stalingrad, the Black and Tans, the Viet-
cong
and Mossad.

Every last man jack of 'em.
Bored and still mad up for it,
he announces a gang resurrection
returnin to mainlands of clay and despair
Georgie Best and Michael Collins,
Christy Ring and Elvis.

One by one, in headlines everywhere,
he completely defeats them
at soccer and handball and hurlin and dancin
at head-the-ball, bare-knuckle-fistin, cock-fights
and freakin out women.

Whereupon he finally declares himself
the Permanent Champion Of Evrythin.

Then, to end and begin, outstretched,
he assumpts himself live onstage in Moonshine Stadium

kaleidoscopically spinnin
fountainin fireworks

as he bends to show off
a shinin New Ireland
emergin from his a-ho like an egg.

MEDIUM

Think of the million who didn't make it.
But were the reason you did make it.

What floods they were burnt in.
What woods they were drowned in.

What band of savage gentlemen
stampeded their villages over a cliff.

What boneground & bloodgrowth
our Earth is. Dust & ash of long-gone

fallen, recently fallen, all now mid-fall.
What perpetuates is vanishing.

Shades at the edge of the frame.
Flames that flare through the grate

bearin disappeared faces. Grave,
bitter, winter voices hailin through screens

all through your childhood
durin televised matches.

Now figure why they were hailin you.
How they knew your name.

FOCUS ON THE NEGATIVE

No-one protected you.

It was in no-one's interests to.

No-one cried foul. No-one stood up.

No-one stepped in.

& it was no-one interfered with you.

& it was no-one broke your mind, your eye, your throat,

& it was no-one heard you cry, nor choke.

No-one cleared away the mess.

No-one didn't dial an ambulance.

No-one burnt the evidence
that nothin had occurred.

No-one from the station told no-one to keep schtum.

& it was no-one took you to an alleyway.

& it was no-one dumped you in a bin.

& no, no-one

saw no-one do nothin that evening, not once

and no,
no-one heard anythin
smelt anythin
felt anythin
back then

and no
no
no-one's said nothin
to nobody
since.

And, yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.
No-one is innocent of this.

MUCK SAVAGE

The minute the fiddler takes to the stage
betwixt the rapper and the organist
I dive out through a slit in the rear of

the reggae tent, meanin to take a slash and chill.
But there's a rave throbbin in the woods beyond.
Bonfires radiatin inside holly, spruce, and ash.

Canvas banners thrashin in the storm.
Chinese lanterns chasin 'cross the speckled dusk
like molten bloodhounds packed against the moon.

I'm twisted, I'm a little bit skagged. Can't recall
who I tagged along to the festival with,
what o'clock or eve it is, precisely ...

How the trout am I gonna get home? ... Did I bring
a tent ... Yo! What the sugar's the hun with
the glow sticks, the yokes, the coloredy fleece

called again? ... If you fly with the crows you'll be shot
with the crows ... my Dad said. Could be doin with a
suck on a spliff ... a dab ... so scannin fore, then
midground

for someone to tap, I sketch three paralytics

at a tipped-over shitehouse, legless, claspin
wire fence to hold upright. Never piss on electric wire.

In Tipperary Gah shirts. Tall guys. Hurlers.
Sinewy bastards. Dude in the middle bendin
double belchin steam and spittle like a hot bog

in Iceland, chuckin up loads. Distressed he is.
Heavyweight retchin bout. Losin control.
Nearly throwin the towel in, collallapsin.

I see him stretched out to dissolve
in the land and its zillions of ants, trillions
of carcasses. What a banquet he'd make

for the jackdaws. If ya lie down with
the dogs ya'll rise up with the fleas. Small urge
in me for callin an ambulance. Small

but rapidly growing. 'Til the others start
eggin him on. G'wan Jamey! Fuckin champion
craic man! Jamey swims with the general will —

hauls himself rigid and warrior-tall,
drawin gallon-swills of boostin oxygen,
then arches crablike at the waist to balance

backwards on his massive palms, stallin

as the constellations eddy, the cosmos rearranges
around him, 'til his whistlin tongue-tip

comes aligned with the prong of The Plough
and he launches like Polaris through the murk,
propellin himself straight, hurlin bilious floods

of intermingled crackers, croutons, crisps,
sausage rolls, Diarmuid's Special Offer Salsa Dips,
Guinness, Smirnoff Ice, Devil's Bit, roasted nuts

and Dubonnet and effervescent codeine foam and fizz
up
up

up

up over the fence
up over the flags
up over the maize

down into the pines
down into the flames
down into the rave

CHAROLAIS

When, in the 1760s, in Paris,
the Comte Du Charolais, a member of the Condé,
clan and the Faubourg St. Germain
and a Prince of The Blood is unable

to locate his mistress at her usual station
inside the crowded-out cafe
beneath her current apartment,
he becomes extremely agitated.

She's a fashionable aristitute, Delisle,
with whom Charolais sired a son
and slaughtered him at seven months
with Spanish Fly, and Laudanum.

*He was no sperm of mine, guffaws Du Charolais,
if a drink like that killed him.*
and throats always gape
before ejaculations of laughter.

Now Charolais, in a passionate rage,
assumes her secreted from him
in some fumiferous snug of the gathering,
wearing one of those high-society

human-hair wigs he and other
Bourbon Blood Princes have bought her,
or she's at work in the lounge, or,
more disturbing to him, in the cellar.

So Charolais orders The Watch
(that is, the early Gendarmes),
to surround the Cafe and when the plebs
there continue concealing Delisle

directs an all-out attack.
Many ruffians are bludgeoned.
One loses an eye. Another draws arms
and is shattered through the thigh.

Delisle is not discovered in the cafe
but later, stalking the Rue Traversière,
Charolais sights her from his coach
& ordering the coachman to corral her,

leaps out whip-in-hand,
slaps her twice on the cheek, lashes her backside,
and bundles her into the coach
where he sits down upon her.

Back in the apartment, that he partially pays for,
Charolais commands Delisle
to her chamber to await on all fours there,
bates up her maid and her butler,

(who sound no alarm, but disgrace
him ever-after with the tale
and dream on their deathstraw
of his body in a bonfire),

then orders supper, dines for
an hour-and-a-half and retires.
Charolais and Delisle spend all night
and the next day together

in each other's arms.

IN THE WOODS

I am the jolly old bear
with lifetimes of honey behind him.

I am the anxious old poet
passin through annually
murmurin verses.

I am Pan the old goat-god,
put to sleep in a shebeen
and shanghaied by Druantia.

I am the frozen old leaf there,
yellow, frost-furred, upended.

SOMEONE ELSE'S TURN

Three years after her classmate Johnny,
who also loved dancin,
dies in junior infants of cancer,
my daughter's in the back of our car after school,
and we're stalled at the lights,
& we're all lookin out
at the afternoon sky over the Wicklow Mountains.

Wow, says my wife, the driver,
see how those clouds
hang so low on The Sugarloaf, & the gold
of the sun right through them, like a crown
for the mountain? Isn't it strikin,
so rich & so colourful,
like you'd see in a gallery?

Every year, says my eight-year-old daughter,
when it's Johnny's Anniversary,
the clouds float down
from heaven with Johnny floatin
down on them so he can see his friends
and family & say hi.

Really?, say I out of curiosity,
but also mild concern...
...What else happens on Johnny's Anniversary?

Oh, says she, in the nighttime
Johnny jumps out of his grave
and dances in the moonlight
to his favourite music
like Michael Jackson
for a while
and when he finishes dancin the moon applauds
and so do the yews & so do the crows & the cows
and the toads & the ferns

and so do all the other dead people in the graveyard
who've been
watchin him dancin away....

And I say Really? Why's that?

Cos it's someone else's turn the next night
and everyone has to get a clap & a hip-hip-hurrah
when it's their turn
you eejit.

DISCLOSURE

I saw them
down by the bay

two young lovers strolling
hand in hand

towards the overgrown lane
past that ancient graffiti

as if the world
had not changed

as if such things
as young lovers

beelinin down
overgrown lanes

past ancient graffiti
were still proper

still possible
in the new times

under the new laws.

I saw them and

I regret to say
I did not report them.

I told no-one about them, til now.

I AM SALMON

I am Salmon.

I am Salmon
in a poisoned stream,

tryin to heal myself
upriver like you.

Part healed
and part poisoned then,

and part-poisonin too.

INCIDENTS AT NAYLORS COVE

A duck wings past.

The waves hiss
like a thousand cartoon serpents
in advance fizzle like ten thousand
tinny sizzlin cymbals in retreat.

Our hero finds the most comfortable place in the cliff-
face with a windbreak.

Smoke rises & disperses.

One, then two robins come & check out the beach, sand
shook from their claws their legs like fossilised worms.

The once again curious absence of seagulls is noted.

Distant scenes of glassy shipless sea; blue horizon;
gorse-in-outbreak on Bray Head; misty Howth Hill &
environs are noted.

Enterin swiftly from the Northern Flank a real athlete of
a rat hovercrafts across the roughly midground sand &
pebbles.

Then disappears like rats do. Slinky things.

Whimsical delusions of Victorian swimmers escapin antique photographs & emergin exuberant from the waves on 19th Century holiday.

Of locatin the buried wreck of a platform & ridin a steamtrain all the way to 1880.

THE SHAMAN OF CHARLESLAND

Tmro it's the shakes on the layin of bricks
& a smithereened mind no plus-pill will fix

but now he's Buddha x'ed with Aleister Crowley -
migratin spacetime, metamorphin the settee:

blink it's a longboat aflame on the Volga,
blink again it's a throne for an alien Pasha!

Tmro is nothin but migraine and puking
and the lads on site all day mockin & sniggerin,

but now he's Big Bang's wise older brother,
a matter-magician who fishes in mirrors

& reels in the creatures of parallel spheres,
machine elves & mothmen & three-headed seers

who divulge that this real world's a con & veil,
giftn him Stone, Sword, Crown, & Grail...

Tmro it's back to the grind with a smack
& the ould-sin-phantoms on an all-out attack

but now he's jugglin black holes on the Green as he
floats through the aether of N-dimethyltryptamine.

Yep, tmro it's concrete & barrow & kango & crane
while worms of past failures tunnel his brain,

But now blue beams of lightnin fork from his tips,
now new Milky Ways stream out from his lips!

CHALK MARKINGS

That feelin after a ride
when the someone says
will I put the kettle on?

Is a haiku (It'll do)

I would very much like to see
accurately translated
into chalk markings

& chalked onto the pavement
outside every abode
in my local human zoo.

EPITAPH FOR A GENTLEMAN FARMER

And if you are not yet dead physically
what of it? Long have I fancied your dying.
Long have I waited my turn in the long line
to stab you, in return, in the back.

You have insulted the muses enough.
At their command I graffiti your headstone
in advance & hereby place
your livin corpse into the stocks:

"Here lieth one who made a handsome
income out of other people's work,
who toured the planet on expenses
usin others' reputations as his passport,

who had no eloquence but imitation,
who sang like a wind-up bird for the Court,
who used up all his gifts gombeenin
& left not one syllable of worth."

HOLY FUCK THE PRIEST IS RIGHT

“Fr Pat Collins, a Vincentian priest & exorcist based in Dublin, gave a speech at the Divine Convention in June 2019 about prophecy and what God was tryin to tell the universe about the future. He told crowds that 'times of great chaos' were comin and that there would be social 'disturbance' and 'economic unrest' in Europe”

FORECAST OF CHAOS, The Irish Sun, Aug 2 2020

The exorcist on this occasion is talkin sense.
Even if among the last to get it.

Yes, prophet of the ancient sungod, with your gobful of lava or turf, you speak true futures :

Catastrophes doth bestare us with October's leerin eyeball, through January's gauntlet of sharks.

February's asteroid unquestionably arrives.

March sulks & makes faces like a general gulpin of vinegar.

April tails off in a spate of experimental weaponry.

May brings on the emergency Messiahs.

June is flattened by a storm of goats & hairdryers.

Seagulls congregate inside eviscerated cathedrals
screechin a domesplinterin ruckus which seems certain-
ly upward addressed to some seagullin divinity, some
fulfilment of the signs of seagulls, towards the end of
July.

& that is where my vision gets murky.

Therefore yes, diviner in destiny's well, life coach, bicy-
clin Hamlet, whomsoever you be on your toilet, what-
ever your sus, whatever your sell. What you are sayin
has merit. But, like a ham rhyme, any gomsheen can do
it.

Therefore I am circumspect & will check back on it later.
Excuse me, I am the nervous firstborn of an incontinent
gambler.

The drainpipe remains for now the most reliable source
around here...

When it rattles like so in the blowings I can fair guess at
how big a fuss it is, what might be oncomin.

CLASSIFIED

Writer retreats, seekin silence.
Not like that of a hermit.
Like that of the dead.

Not cavern high
nor bricked-in cell
nor snakin catacomb
will serve for it.

Writer requires the absolute,
the Kelvin-point of silence.

Seeks abandoned horse-box
interred in a glacier.

Seeks cabin on a sunken ship
riveted to bedrock
'neath the Mariana Trench.

Seeks passage on
an interstellar time machine
travellin back, way back
to before the Big Bang.

There at the start, all-generatin silence.
There at the end, all-annihilatin silence.

Existence rounded out &
encircled by silence.
The storms on Jupiter drownin
in the tearooms of silence.

All the clamour of our commerce
dissolvin now in the conches of silence.

The pinnacle,
the wherewithal,
the fuck-em-all
is silence.

Silence. Like soliloquies the Gods' make.

Like the conscience of a tyrant.

Like fire in the ice of a comet.

Like the eyeless eyes of science.

Like a typhoon at your neck,
borne about the place in a locket.

BODY

Prison

In which I form and am forming,

In which I am always reforming.

Pacin the hours away, smoking,
scrapin the dates away on the wall.

Until the next release. The next conditional.

Sleepin. Recallin a sensual riot. Plottin an
upcoming. Weekend livin.

Deep distraction in the cinema.

Deep immersion in the dream of a book.

Longin for youth unemployable, euphoric community,
ecstatically lost at a rave, at a carnival. Hundreds of
drums.

Hundreds of shakers. Hundreds of whistles.

On Doves, an Indian head.

A blowjob for an hour or so on speed.

Writin for me is a breach of the skin,
an exit from time,

a break from the madhouse called history.

A great buzz. The greatest of all.

Comin down the sentence is deepened.

Promise disinvests the world. As in that
solitary vacuum, unentwinin after love.

Dread is in possession.

Somethin is chasin me. Inside and out.

I don't know what.

A stopwatch tickin in everything everywhere
countin me down to a crash or a bomb.
The sun a mockin asteroid gettin ready to plunge.
On Night Street, I can't tell the difference of junkies
and spooks. The moon is a skeleton's arse cheek,
a piece of debris in a mini-skirt.
Try writin but all I can think is the schedule of bin lifts.
To put out green or black this week?
Twenty different bastards try to sell me electricity.
Make the calculations on my stupidphone.
The trees in the park are all gallows-in-waiting.
The city is broodin above me, epidurally numb,
incubatin massacres. Gigantic and mythless,
The constantly labourin city.
I'm glad for all that.
I'm happy for death.
Somewhere a man I'm not yet
is raped with a bottle in front of his children.
How the Kin stays up.
There are fissures. There are oozins.
Shit, containin forests and herds.
Sperm, condemnin multitudes.
Tears, which used to be miracles,
till they wound up drippin from statues.
Words, so disappointed-in-themselves,
wantin so much to be numbers,
growin ever more pointless and ever more accurate,
pourin forth for the sake of invasions.

Song, belongin to birds,
whom we steal from and grotesquely imitate.
Body, these days I love you- if love is the term-
for your factual limits, your sincere offer of an ending.
You have given me much. Much access. Much ecstasy.
Much dreamin.

I don't want anymore now to escape you.
Not because you're safe or even comfortable-
because I'm a coward; cautious and cynical.
Speed would blow a tunnel through my lobes.
I'd need ten yokes and ten hands on my scalp
for a rush that would last half a minute at most.
Skunk? I'm made paranoid by the idea of it.
I don't sleep around. I'm not all that interested.
And I fret about clinics and gossips.
I'm more pupa than angel.
I've realised how I'm wingless, deformed and expend-
able.
Runnin round in a zero till pop!
Whatever I am just doesn't take-off.

21 PROVERBS

(for Ray Blackwell)

Hell has run out of handbaskets.

The stones have stopped rollin & are covered in moss.

The bird fell dead from your hand & the bush is burnt to a crisp.

Those stitches in time - they burst.

Every picture tells a thousand lies & every lie is worth a thousand knives.

The best things in life packed their bags long ago.

We blew up the bridge before we came to it.

A grenade went off in our basket of eggs.

Every cloud has a B52.

Stand up eight times, fall down nine.

Half a poisoned loaf is worse than none.

You can neither bate them nor join them.

Laughter is a sign you need medicine.

Invention is the mother of depravity.

All pain, & no gain.

Rome was looted in a day.

Still waters run deep with dead fish.

The grass is just as absent on the other side of the fence.

When the goin gets tough, the tough get incinerated.

The darkest hour is just before the bomb.

The late worm avoids the birds.

A BEGGAR

Disembarkin
the Ha'penny Bridge

siftin beneath
flipperin feet.

Erratic heart
ether-pumpin.

Grindin mouth
expellin air and Earth.

Slips to the quay
path and damns

pressed pedestrian throngs
signal attendin.

From that suckin slop,
those gaseous flares

he rises amphibious
triumphant

in a bliss of unseein
these clumped passages

for companions
released in Elysian distances.

Gibberin sorcerer.
Igneous toad

with Elmo's eyes
and Nippur's lung,

breathin ashes
and flint

and the plumes of the sun.
Onward,

Empyrean sailor,
onward, onward shall he rove,

out from afternoon's crush,
into the flowin road.

THE FOUR HONESTIES

The honesty of wind:
everything must whistle by,
everything must blow.

The honesty of sea:
everything must churn,
everything must flow.

The honesty of sun:
everything must feed the fire,
everything must glow.

The honesty of earth:
everything must go to seed,
everything must sow.

and snappin off a healthy branch
will draw a heavy curse on life.
What and where cannot be said.
A healthy branch is a well of dread.

Still, ancient impulse leans to the perfect bond of a stick.
I feel a far ancestral honourin,
I shake the stick above my head and yawp like Eve,
yawp like Rousseau, yawp as beardy Whitman did.

and rise and rise
I fall and fall
and twist in my own yawpin stick-dance,

spiralin to archetypal dreamtime,
to distant eidolons of human wilderness;
a million years old and unexpelled,
not yet parted from the forest...

....romantic guff,
paint and fumes to cheat my guilt, deny reality.
For God is only living-life, and when I was eight I tor-
tured God,
tormented animals, hacked at sappin wood.

At eight a boy's already part of teak,
already animated by his stick;
his spear,

his wand,
his staff,
his rod.

Each battlin phantom in his DNA
still graspin through the aeons
at this multi-purpose limb,

this cable routin him
through instant ages up
to modern man,

to man who'd slash a path through anythin,
to man who stands back to probe
without touching,

to man who handles the world
without feeling,

to man by which the hacked tree sows
its Amazon of grief,

to man by which the numb roots spread
colonisin every nerve and tip.

I am man now, and I'm gettin a grip.

FOR A MURDERED WOMAN

You had nothin to give
but your skin
and your touch
and your love

and so the men who came to you
they must have come to you

for your skin
and your touch
and your love

and they came
and they came
and they came

and you gave
and you gave
and you gave

and they took
and they took
and they took

and then they left
and they left

and they left

one after another

until this last bad bastard stuck

this slicer

this scalper

this seven-bladed murderer

who numbed your skin

and froze your touch

took love away from you

and you away from love

and left the rest you loved

and who loved you

with nothing

nothing

but a fading echo

of your love.

THE BEOTHUK IN IRELAND

(for Ron Hynes)

The Irish

wiped them out

when we came here

we drove cattle at them

drove them over cliffs

into the icy, churnin ocean

men women and children

the man who told me that

the man of a thousand songs

wrote Sonny's Dream

that intercontinental folksong

I thought my faader wrote that

says I, to cod him

it was March in Newfoundland

we were outside the pub

outside the music

chattin, puttin it on a bit

for each other

it was snowin

the street was half-buried in snowdrifts

& the last one of all the Beothuk

known, supposedly, as Shanawdithit,

died out

in 1829

accordin to Wikipedia

there's nothin more

i feel like sayin to you now about

48

what the Irish have achieved in Canada

you can say it if you like

i'd rather go mute

i'd rather have my tongue pulled out

and exported in a can of tongues

and fingers

and anyways it's far too cold

this world's too cold for yabber

in Ireland it's Easter

and it's snowin

and it will snow again

snow again, again, and deeper

until the streets are white

until the hills are blue

until all our crosses, croaghs, and spires
are blinded white
beneath a glacier
until there's no-one left to chat and fake
nothin shameful left
to cover

HOW TO DEAL WITH BEIN STONED

Try & curl up on the ground & make of your sockets & limbs as much of a thick-walled fortress as you can & make sure to muffle your ears with your elbows or palms from the mob whose revelry in killin you tortures you with humiliation & amplifies your terror. Then the great hope - yes yes hope even then stupid infuriatin hope - the great hope you can legitimately hold out is that you will be struck bad quick on the back of the head & knocked cold.

FOR CHRISTY DIGNAM

You are the one I will think of
the next time I hear
a sociologist declare
there is no such thing
as Working Class Culture.

I'll picture you with Finbarr on the Banjo
duettin Green Fields of France
on the Late Late Show -
a summonin to the dead &
to the livin to unite;

you singin like the dead boy's
heart itself might sing,
if the dead boy's heart could sing
like you from underneath,
sing like you through the screen
for half a million unknown & unseen,
& move nearly every one.

By half-way through the second chorus,
tens of thousands all over Ireland
are singin along.

A long overdue mass ritual.
Your lightnin strikin everyone at once.

Your people risin from stool
& settee to adore you
& they are right to.

With your wish-mouth
& your dream-throat
& The Republic of Equals
you bear aloft in your voice.

Your people have made the right choice.

For you go through what fire,
what ice, what mud that they go through
& as you carry them, they carry you.
as you enfold them, they enfold you.

GOLDEN TEACHER

On advice from a friend
& seekin wisdom
I took a dose of the famed
Golden Teacher Mushroom

Duly, followin a bad dose
of the shits, a puke, & a panic attack,
Golden Teacher found me out
shiverin & stinkin in the Jacks

& imparted her 24-carat wisdom,
sayin: *Never take Golden Teacher Mushrooms.*

LOCKDOWN ANIMALS

Accordin to the leaflet
rats are all over our estate
especially the bin units.

Accordin to RTE
billions of huge flyin Ants
are swarmin from the east.

I saw several weeks ago
black cat Shadow swallow
two yellowtits whole & raw.

Since lockdown began
feral cats come closer each day
to lickin or bitin my hand.

The hedgehog in my neighbour's garden
is without peace since
its discovery by children.

TIGER BLOWJOB

I debated a while whether to call this poem
Language or The English Language or English
or The Entrepreneur or Current Pedagogic Methodolo-
gy or even English School but it wasn't a school
in spite of its departmental stamps and certificates
and its 1200 registered clients, each handin over
thousands and thousands in fees.

It was just a second floor office
in Tiger Central above a tanning lounge
and next door to a corporate paint-balling agent's
and it was far from the only operation
that instead of sellin lessons was, with greater acumen,
sellin attendance. 90 ticks. 90 teacher's ticks were need-
ed at the end of every 6 month period
for the GNIB (Garda National Immigration Bureau)
to examine and then, findin all else satisfactory,
consent to renew those special ex-EU work-and-study
visas which gave contingent sanction to a quota
of mainly young and transient cheap-labour emigrants
to work in the western world as long as they attended
those expensive English Lessons for a mandatory five
days a week leavin little choice to each but make
the tills continually click for the bosses of
convenience stores while handin up
the bulk of their wages to the Language Schools,
and the remainder to their landlords

(I heard of teenage Chinese sleepin nine to a room)
so that they couldn't make any decent money for them-
selves
or to remit before workin a sixty-hour week
which doesn't leave much concentration
left for learnin lists of past participles
or fillin in blanks in the future conditional.
It wasn't long before many students discovered,
like many since and before them, that you can learn
more English in even or especially the shittiest job
just because you have to learn it
to get by than you ever could in a school or university
and you'll earn more money too and send bigger bun-
dles
home and it wasn't long either before some of the boss-
es
in these innovative Language Schools came to realise
that not-teaching
could be just as lucrative as teaching, could be
a million wad just danglin there in front of you
and all you had to do was make a grab
and so my mate's mate, also his dealer, who worked for
this Quality Assured
Guaranteed Irish Departmentally Certified school
one summer as its Academic Manager, whenever
a young woman from Recife or Nanjin or Mauritius
would turn up centless in a sob because the boyfriend
had pissed or mah-jonged the earnings or she had been

needle-mugged or she had wired it to buy back
her little sister from the mob or it was crocodile
or whatever and she couldn't or wouldn't pay
for the attendance ticks but had come to beseech him
like Magdalene anyway, well my mate's mate would,
decently,
let her away with it, providin absolutely every tick she
needed
for the small consideration of a blowjob.

*

I debated for a while what I should call this poem
and I considered Visadick and LinguaCock and CocK-
tionary
and The man whose lad had visas in it
and The man who came language and even Liquidity
but none of the above had the bite
the clamp the rip the chomp the chew the suck
the roarin thirst the burnin goo for blood
and piss
and spunk
and words
I think this story wanted.

HERO

Look at it there
the curdled heart
of Achilles

(who no longer stands,
orates, or thinks.)

Torn out by the aorta
by the force of the blast
and placed

against a lily-white background,
examplin us all.

The work of Gods with savage hands.
Gods of bronze & Gods of corn.

Gods that crush
& slash
& burn.

Their's the phalanx
of maggots devouring

the farmed-Salmon meat of it,
off-pink.

Their's the slick black bloods
wormin from the ventricles.

Peg your nose as you approach
this scene: it stinks.

SUMMER

Always you come back
for another teasin gawk at us,

toss us in your Godly palms,
mock us in the open air -

the utterclusterfuck of everythin,
how it so reliably gets worse

& fuckin worse from year to year
like the world is a maniac's clock.

Here you go again bastard killer
whom we can't shake off,

lurin young ones from the dunes
into the undertows & rips

settin insects hummin hemispherically
in their symphony of genitals,

come to prise out of agony's gardens
the wombfruit of last autumn's rapes.

RUBBER BULLET

There is no happy song
to be sung
about a rubber bullet.

No words exist to decorate
the horror of it.

From across a street,
a man blasts a rocket
into a child's eye

& if you ask the man why
he will

give you a reason

he might even believe.

**MARTIN/A CUMMINS APPEARS TO THE VIRGIN
MARY.**

(for Sara Philips)

This is how it starts: Assumption afternoon in eighty-six,

Martin/a Cummins clackin high-heel homeward
towards that Inchadoney Crib
they've slathered indoors black, exterior mauve,
in imitation of a rumour about Prince.

The sea in retreat behind the Island fillin in
the oncomin distance; its searin ridge,
its grassy, sparkling, quartzzy flank,
stone-wall-stitched and scarred by ditch...

...and in the drained bay a black iron anchor
like a Belgian Moustache
is weighin down a Buccaneer that isn't there,
that sailed away to nowhere long ago.

All Aboard!! All Aboard!! No Rationing!

A buoy half-mired in slop,
green wet head of a merman monk.
Slickly, refuse bulgin from a bin-bag
– intestines on a sandy battlefield.

Salt-wind fussin a sycamore copse.
Kerfuffle of gulls at a porpoise's corpse.
Seaweed crackle in the August heat.
One lonesome Shellduck alarming.

Then Virgin Mary bobbin spotless
up the gritty slipway from the slop,
bathed in The Uncreated Light,
pulsin egg-shell aura blue,
sprayin stars and Doves.
Eclipsing. Shadow-casting. Hovering.
Sightin Martin A in their cleopatra wig.
Burgundy high heels, sleeveless leopardskin,
crimson silky C cup bulked
with Evenin Echo supplement,
cleavage rounded out with feathers from an island
cock.
Mini-skirt as raw and red and rough as a barricade
Marseillaise.

Listen to the rushin in the fields.
The howlin... Oh Holy Difference!
Oh frilly-garter-mutant-fish!
Unclassifiable cratur givin Darwins,
Archbishops the slip in this sou-western Galapagos!
Clack-clackin past the Most Holy, Ever-Virgin,
Mystical Rose, Vessel of Honour, She-Who-Shows-The-
Way,

Immaculate Mary, Mirror of Justice, Tower of Ivory,
Mother of the One True Church.

Like she really isn't there, Great Mother.

And so the Virgin, non-plussed, rescinds, or rather sets
back into the slosh of all ages and all ages hence
and Martin A clacks on into the flarin sun...

over the spirallin bayside road
to their satanic coastal crib,
puts the steamy kettle on and
listens for a minute to its plaintive
unforgivin song...

...recomposin in a genie's dream
of becoming
anythin
we wish,

man, woman, manwoman,
top, bottom, topbottom,
Crow, Mare, Crowmare,
Lamb, Lion, Lamblion
...always adorable.

Told, retold, this tale, in lamplit caravans on Moses
Road,

Sunday Morning shush-ins at Sam's Cross,

the back of convent Geography in Clon
the Bus Scoile twixt Durrus and Schull,
there's talk of mushrooms,
of delirium tremens,
of prankin UCC students takin the piss.

They'll be visited by the martians next I bose...
Sure why would Holy Mary appear to that quarehawk,
ha?
Wouldn't it be the Monsignor she'd appear ta?

Yet the immutable punchline remains,
a blessin for transgressors, a slogan shouted
unrepentant from the dock.

Back in '86, – when a million ruined Irish
stood like Moonies in the Ballinspittle muck
starin at a plaster cast expecting
it to quake and talk-
the Virgin Mary, Pregnant with Eternity,
met Martin/a, Our Lordlady of West Cork,
on Assumption Day,
along the Inchadoney Road
and twas Mary leapt to Revelation,
t'was she got the shock.

ON THE BLUEYS

Curled-up like the day
before
he was born

eyes shut,
lights out,
blinds drawn

he's witchin
a midnight
out of noon

meltin into his mattress
like horse melts
in a spoon.

QUILTY

for Donal Minihane

is where
the moon
can be seen

as a hare
or a skull
or the white

pocked banner
of extinction
pursuin

seven streaming
ensigns of the sun
to death

at heavens' edge;
bleedin so brightly
& so colourfully

there. How good
it is to die on time.

NALEDI

for Marion Dowd

No-one knows now what
they talked about or how
they talked about it
or if they even talked at all.

One scholar calls them inbetweeners.
Half-way beings.
Instead of words perhaps
Intensely meaningful gestures.

Another depicts them
strewin their Pre-sapien
fallen with flowers,
implyin burial rites,
afterlives, cosmical ideas.

Perhaps not, say others. Perhaps
the flowers are evidence
of life and death as colourful
accidents both. Not art.

Not bloomin consciousness.

Did we kill them off?
It isn't hard to imagine we did.

Or somehow absorb them?
We, says our DNA, are 6% they.

Afterlives of the Pleistocene -
a nourishing suspension in our blood,
alive inside our life, breeding with all of our dead.

ONE YEAR IN AND IMMA TALKIN TO CLIFFS

Stand up, go on

ya little bollix

says The Cliff

sure would ya look at me

houldin tough

in all weathers

all how-many-ages

not even the heart

with all its grief

the heart of flesh

with all its losses & longins

knows how

long

71

the millions & the billions

that nobody knows

that nobody knows

they don't know

the god of eyes

can barely encompass it

the god of time

is half fed up with it

the god of hope

tries drownin herself

again & again

over it

& you

you by the cliff face

ya weaklin wuss

ya little wren

only expected to wobble

a bit now and then

for

three score & ten.

DA, THE MELODEON

for Joe Lordan

Of quavers and keys
Da haven't a notion

But still an'all
he plays the melodeon.

He can white-puddin the moon
Beamish the ocean

Fry seventeen eggs
and play the melodeon.

Ignorin gales and floods
and coastal erosion

He climbs up Saint Fin Barre's
and blasts that melodeon.

He hammers the Trojans
and leathers the Spartans

As he snores on the sofa
and blares the melodeon.

One Christmas Eve well-on

he stripped down to his jocks

And he rodeoed a herd
of buffalo in the garden

The horns enlocked
the whirlin snouts

The nipples of all
bellowed with emotion.

I loved all that
but was more thrilled

By his right left foot
that played the melodeon.

Of quavers and crotchets
Da haven't a notion

Yet the muses adore him
when he plays the melodeon.

Oh yeh the muses adore him
when he blows that melodeon!

DEFINITION OF A RUNNER

for Terry Fagan

Do you know what A Runner is in Ireland, where I'm from,
in the year that I was born?
A Runner is what the other children call a child, a boy or a girl,
who keeps tryin to run away
from the institution where they are bein held prisoner
by priests or by nuns or by 'brothers'.

I found out what A Runner was at a gatherin of artists and
survivin survivors of clerical child abuse in our
National College of Art and Design last year.
We were all there at the invitation of the poet and performance artist
Lisamarie Johnson to talk to each other about art and survival,
art and memory, art and redemption.

About a lot of stuff I don't really honestly believe in.

Durin our conversation I asked the table's length of
survivin survivors
some questions that have perplexed me for a very long
time:

Why has nobody taken revenge? Why is it none of you have ever barehandedly slaughtered a priest or a nun or a brother? Or even arsoned a convent or church?

That more clerics have not been torn to pieces by the adults of the children they abused is, for me, the great conundrum of modern Irish history, of modern Irish spirituality, of modern Irish philosophy, of modern Irish culture and identity. Of modern Irish poetry.

I think the survivors had been expectin these questions, or they had been asked them many times before by friends and relatives, or these questions were so at home in their own minds that the answer came automatically and simultaneously from the half-dozen of them: Because we are still afraid, they all said. Because the terror takes root so deep down inside you when you are small and it grafts itself to your bones and it splices itself into your cells and it grows as you grow; although it always grows faster than you

it always weighs more, is always stronger, always taller
than you are,
is always there, in a hood and habit, towerin over you,
its big fists hammerin down like a Brother's.

The survivin survivors then started to talk about another man,
a regular of their group,
who had not turned up at our meeting
though he had promised the others to come.
I am goin to call the missin man Paddy.
Paddy had not been well recently,
not since, on Westland Row,
he had spotted a priest who had been
one of the chief torturers of his childhood.
Bumpin in to that old sadist had brought an awful lot
up for Paddy;
all the fear, all the rage, all the hurt, all the despair.

This absent Paddy had been A Runner
the survivin survivors told me.
What's A Runner? I asked. And they told.
Paddy got caught every time he ran.
Paddy would be half way up the high wall,
(all these theologised borstals had high, blank walls)
or three quarters of the way up,
or strugglin to the top and nearly over it,
and a Brother of Christ would catch him by the leg

and yank him back down. Paddy always got caught.
The Brothers had a special way of punishin A Runner
in this vile prison for the innocent. They broke the
child's bone
with a good clatter of a hurley stick,
a weathered one kept handy for the job.
Often it was a wrist they broke,
sometimes an ankle. To make the children crawl. To
make them beg.
To make them think twice about attemptin to run away
again.

But Paddy never stopped tryin to run, no matter how
many times
his wrist or his ankle got broke.
Freedom was a-beckonin just beyond that wall.
Freedom to be a child like the other children.
Paddy heard laughin and joustin just beyond that wall.
If he could only just make it over the once
Paddy thought he'd have a chance to laugh and play
along.
He was that innocent. He was that holy.
He was that much of A Runner.
You had to run away a few times to
get the name of A Runner. You had to show repeatedly
that your desire for freedom was greater than
the fear of broken bones, or of dying.
The clerics often killed children in those places.

They killed them for hate and for rage and they killed
them for pleasure.

They killed them with savage bateings
and they buried them hurriedly in unmarked graves
and the Guards ignored it
and the doctor signed the death certificate as accident
and that was that: covered up. Forgotten.

A Runner: the most noble title of my nation.
So much more than Taoiseach, or President, or Saoi.
But we have never been a nation.

Our nation died in 1923 at Ballyseedy.
Swift saw us coming: a nation of bonechewers,
a nation that dines on the bones of poor children.

Paddy's aged a lot, the survivin survivors were tellin
me,
since he had the misfortune to run in to that toxic old
goon of a priest
– still in his frock and all.
He doesn't come to meetings or take part in social activ-
ities with the other
survivin survivors like he used to anymore.
He stays in his bedsit talkin to himself
because he can't run away
from himself.

Cowerin in his bedsit: the cherished one

of all the group,
totem of the uncrushable will to be free
against all odds,
Paddy the Runner:
a shiverin snivellin child in his fifties
behind four blank walls
afraid to try climbin over
in case he gets caught.

TO LOVE AND BE LOVED

(after Raymond Carver)

For a whole year the master bate & taunted the child with the lisp. He taunted & bate the child with the lisp until the tears from the child's eyes ran together with the blood from the child's nose, drippin from his little chin, stainin & crustin his blazer & trousers so he carried the news of his torture around for the the day like sorrow's flag. The Master bate the fatherless child until the child pissed himself at the desk and had to sit snivellin & humiliated in cold piss for yearhours til hometime. He bate the weepin child until the child developed a stutter to go with the lisp. Day after day, week after week, month after month, term after term, the master bate the child & taunted him, taunted & bate the brotherless child until 3rd class was up & the child limped out of that abattoir of learnins, never to return, nor forget. Yet, after many hard years & all but impossible struggles this sisterless child grew up beloved to love & be loved,

and the master didn't.

BELT

Yes, I was also alive in the time
Of the tightenin belt

And when I woke just now
To a blindin dark
In a sweat

Havin just stepped over
My brother Mark

Not movin on that stairwell,
The strap-end clamped in his jaw, way

beyond notes of
the leather noose
slicin into his wrist

I recalled. No more - I saw, and I understood
just how tight
things could get.

Goodbye my long-ago brother.
Goodbye stairwell and strap.
Farewell. Shoo-shoo.
Hello.

NEIGHBOUR

Dear in-hock-for-a-lifetime
Suburban, anonymous, pebble-dashed,
Pre-packaged-dream-house Neighbour of mine,

I have not got a clue about you
What your name is
Where you hail from
To whom you belong
Whatever it is that you do.

Though I am more than familiar
With the cursed electrical dirge of your shower
That moans through brick and cement in between us
Every workaday mornin of winter
In the draught-ridden dark before dawn.

And I have come to forgive you your musical taste
In the best left unsung
For mine is as poor
While Sepultura rock out of your Pod
Tiffany herself goes on soilin my Zen.

And Neighbour, I must confess
That when I'm out in the yard for a smoke
I sometimes peer over your fence
And spy through your blinds

How the grey outlines glide from table to couch!

Such mystery! Such grace!

Like a swan in the mists of a moor!

Like a deer in a twilit oak wood!

So, Neighbour of mine

Fellow drudge, fellow drone

Fellow white-collar bee in a dormitory town,

You who snore and make love,

Gobble and belch, stain and wash up, as I do,

In the same white-washed,

Breeze-blocked,

Ten-by-eight rooms,

Movin through time to destination unknown

Do you ever wonder

When your back's against the wall

That mine might be too?

Yes, that mine will be too...

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

My name is Dave Lordan.

I am 45 years old
and I am a poet.

I am against prisons.

I am against history.

I come from a long line of poets
though I am the first out of all of them
to have anythin to do with poetry.

My father, for example, is a poet,
a poet of howlin survival,
and of the triumph of mirth over doom.

All the bone cold dead of his ancestry
in their coffins and pits
warm by the dream of
seein him soon. They know he'll be giftin
great bounty of laughin
that he stole from the miser called time.

Both of my Nanas,
though they are many years dead
and have never had anything
to do with poetry, are poets.

My Nana on my mother's side

is a poet of sorrows and secrets
and bearing. She bore seven children
and thousands of sorrowful secrets.
By the stove, on her one piece suite,
she weeps all her sorrows and secrets
into bottles and glasses and embers and smoke
full of glimmerin ghosts
of lost sweethearts and infants
she won't have abandoned
and she grants me to store in my eyelids for poems.

My Nana on my father's side
is a poet of revelation
and of hallucination.
She introduced me
to prophets and angels

when I was a boy
and, due to her commendation,
I have been on good terms with them since.
She lives in my ear and my tongue and my vision
and she minds me from harm.

Times when I've rushed to the borders of life
to ask death for an early appointment
she's interceded to make death refuse me
and so I surfaced again to light and the breath.
I wish to thank her here now publicly for that.

My mother,
beautiful muse,
beautiful nurse,
beautiful magician of my being,
is not a poet.
Instead, she is a musician.

Each one of us is imprisoned in time
and oppression.
Each suffers alone in their own separation.
Our music's how we contradict.
We sing and strum, we bang and drum and chant,
callin out through each other's bars
of the freedom
the human is promised

though we know not the hour
nor the land.

My mother is a musician
although she has never had
anything to do with musicianship,
except this one thing:

In mid-December of 1963,
when my mother was eleven
and in the second last year of her schooling

the teachin Nuns of Moyderwell in Tralee
took her 5th class primary
on their annual outing
to the Killarney red-brick,
which some called and some still call the mad-house,
to play a nativity concert for inmates.

Due to a seasonal illness
5th class's one flautist was absent
and my little mother
who I imagine near speechless
with shyness at that age
and usually called on
for nothing, usually treated as irritant extra,
was conscripted to fill
in the gap in the show.

The nun in charge of
the concert put a stop of crushed tissue
in the foot of the flute
to keep it from soundin in error,
then handed it over to my tremulous mother
orderin her to take up position in the accompanyin row
of musicians to the rear of the choir
and pretend to be playin along.

Back then, when a nun in an Irish school
for the herded poor gave a task to a child

the child carried it out without question,
not out of love or respect,
but from terror.

My mother obliged the head nun
since she wished
to hang on to her flamin long hair
and not have it sheep-shorn -
a routine nun punishment.

So my mom played miraculous flute.

She played the flute for an hour without playin it.

The Christmas concert
for Killarney's mental prisoners of 1964
was saved
by a terrified girl playin along
by not playin a flute.

How I pity those nuns and their orders, their cruelty.
They were love's aliens, foreign to divinity,
and converts to a void, bequeathing
the stamp of assault, festerin memory.
And how I worship my eleven year old mother
for she comes with her flute to me daily
as I write in my suburban attic room
and in her airs I can hear beyond hearing
imaginary concerts

in the music of the silenced,
the magnificent choirs of their victory.

My name is Dave Lordan.

I am a poet. Against prisons. Against history.

I am seven million years old.

I come from a long line of howlers,

a long line of sorrowful secrets,

a long line of shiverin mutes,

fiddlin joy out of doom,

stealin laughter from time,

charmin tunes out of prisons of quiet.

Yes, my name is Dave Lordan, and

I am a poet

with no obligations

but to strike for the truth,

for the quiverin phrases of promise,

for the stop to be blown from the flute.

ALSO BY DAVE LORDAN

POETRY PAMPHLETS

-18- (UCC English Literature Society) 1992

Clonakilty Red Pudding 1999

Unoccupied Minds (with Ibrahim Nasrallah & May Muzafar, published by the Irish Anti War Movement) 2003

Indiscipline (with Elaine Feeney) 2006

The Four Honesties (e-pamphlet) 2016

Anti-pope (e-pamphlet) 2019

BOOKS

(Poetry)

The Boy in The Ring 2007

Invitation to a Sacrifice 2010

Lost Tribe of The Wicklow Mountains 2014

Medium 2021

(Short Fiction)

First Book of Frags (Wurm Press) 2013

Little Museums of Dublin (Forthcoming)

(Essays)

The Word In Flames - essays on Literature & Revolution
(e-book, intro by William Wall) 2016

CDs

Surviving the Recession (produced by Aidan Daly) 2010

AUDIOBOOKS

The Dead Friends (published by Dublin Inquirer) 2018

Discover Ireland (Live) 2018

Into The Twilight (Soundscaped Selection of Yeats), 2018

Snowflakes (soundscaped poetry) 2019

Becoming Polis (fiction, published by Granta) 2019

The Only Real Irish Poet in Dublin (fiction, sound-scaped by Derek Flynn) 2020

VIDEO & SHORT FILM

Surviving The Recession (2010, live, directed by Paula Geraghty)

The Fcuking Titanic (with Eamonn Crudden) 2012

My Mother Speaks to Me of Suicide 2014

Lost Tribe of The Wicklow Mountains 2014

Because I'm Human 2015

Sara's Badges 2016

Lament For Graham Parkinson (with Karl Parkinson & Conor Murphy) 2017

After I Saw (with Fionn Ó Halmhain) 2018

The People Died (with Karl Parkinson) 2019

Anti-Fracking Anthem (with Eoghain Ó Ceannabhain)
2020

DRAMA

Jo Bangles (starring Mary Mcevoy) 2010

Droppin The Act (with Karl Parkinson) 2014

Murder Manor (online audiodrama with Graffiti Youth Theatre, as multimedia editor) 2020

SOUND ART

A Theological Argument (with Bernard Clarke) 2013

SONGS

Tribute to Joe Strummer (with Radical Picnic) 2010

Lost Tribe of The Wicklow Mountains (with Christy Moore) 2016

VIDEO COURSES

Creative Writing Now 2015

Creative Writing Now for Youth 2016

Teaching Creative Writing 2018

Exploring Poetry 2020

AS EDITOR

Stinging Fly Special Issue on the New Irish Avant-Garde
(2012)

New Planet Cabaret (first anthology of Irish spoken
word movement) 2013

Young Irelanders (New Wave Irish Short Fiction) 2014

AS PRODUCER

RTE Poetry Programme 1916 Centenary Special (2016)