



SOS Poetry

MAIRÉAD BYRNE

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Mairéad Byrne

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SOS POETRY

MAIRÉAD BYRNE

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Writing is the joy when all other joys have failed.
—Russell Edson

I breathe and a poem jumps up.
—Tomaz Salamun

1 VIVAS

“CRUMBLE TOUCH”

- Always arrive in town 2 years after property prices go up?
You’ve got “CRUMBLE TOUCH”
- Always sign on the dotted line the day before interest rates come down?
You may have “CRUMBLE TOUCH”
- Always on the wrong side of the cut-off date, rate, income, or city limit?
Could you be a victim of “CRUMBLE TOUCH”?
- Too old to win the Yale Younger Poets even though your poetry is FUCKING BRILLIANT?
The problem may be “CRUMBLE TOUCH”
- Have all your significant sexual relationships been with alcoholics and/or the mentally ill?
Ever consider “CRUMBLE TOUCH”?
- Is life an unending struggle? Chances are you’re riddled with “CRUMBLE TOUCH.”
- Ever feel your luck has run out or was delivered to you in a leaky bag all those years ago?
That’s “CRUMBLE TOUCH”

HELP IS AT HAND

TAKE **“RIGIDITY”**: THE FIXATIVE FOR FIXING YOUR LIFE
 PUT BACK-BONE IN YOUR FINGER-TIPS
 NO MORE “CRUMBLE TOUCH”
 ROLL WITH THE PUNCHES LIKE A NINE-PIN
 LAUGH IN THE FACE OF THE FATES **HA-HA-HA-HA-HAH!**
 BE DEVIL-MAY-CARE LET YOUR HAIR BLOW IN YOUR FACE AS YOU ENJOY THE RIDE
 OF YOUR LIFE IN THE CONVERTIBLE OF THE NEW YOU!
RIGIDITY! YOUR TICKET TO PEACHINESS
CARPE DIEM WITH A GOLDEN HANDSHAKE TODAY

THE EATEN BAGEL

THE EATEN BAGEL

Is swallowed by

The Designated

OWNER

Of THE EATEN BAGEL

(THE ONE to whom THE BAGEL

Is assigned

THE ONE who has THE RIGHT)

THE EATEN BAGEL is hidden

THE EATEN BAGEL is a lump in the throat

THE EATER *of* THE BAGEL is gleeful

THE EATEN BAGEL is secreted

All over THE BODY of THE

CONVERSATION *of* THE

BAGEL'S anticipation—

In THE CURVE between

CHIN & NECK

In **THE ARM-PIT**

Between THE BREASTS

THE EATEN BAGEL is

EATEN much more thoroughly

By its ANTICIPATOR

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THE ONE

Who did not

EAT THE BAGEL

Than by the one who got to **EAT**

The **EATEN BAGEL**

BONKERS

I would have gone to work today
But I AM **BONKERS**

I would have cooked a fat warm stew
But I AM **BONKERS**

I would have done my taxes
But I'M **BONKERS**

I would have caught the T to the BLT
But you see I'M **BONKERS**

I'M BONKERS

I would have worn my square suit
Cut draped tweaked flexed

Too perfectly except
I'M **BONKERS**

I AM A LION

I am a lion

I am a lion

I am a lion *RAAAHHRRRRRRHHHH!*

I am a lion

I am a lion

I am a LION!

I am a lion

I am a lion

I am not a liar

I am a lion

I AM A LION!

I am a lion

I am a lion

I am a lion

I am a lion *YAY!*

I am a lion

I am a LEONINE lion

I am a lion

I used to be a CRAB

Now I am a LION!

HOW TO

PUSH with legs against the ground with high force and high speed.

THRUST against the ground [with a force of 10 times your body weight]
with legs half-extended at peak force [and take-off velocity of about 3 m.s⁻¹]

FLEX back legs, contracting muscles

CROUCH down

HANG a slight delay between crouch & leap

JUMP!

HUMIDITY

What is it?
It's the humidity.
No—what is it?
Humidity.
But what is it?
Humidity?
Oh what's humidity!
What's humidity!

WIND CHILL

What is it?
It's the wind chill.
No—what is it?
Wind chill.
But what is it?
Wind chill?
Oh what's wind chill!
What's wind chill!

360°

And one—
It's January
And two—
It's February
And three four five—
It's May
And turn—
It's June
And turn—
It's July
Now break for coffee—
It's August!
And turn—
September!
And one two three
December!
It's over!
We're done!

NEW YEAR LETTERS

1

Martha,

It is a long time since we saw you. The cold is terrible. John is engaged.
God bless and best wishes for 1002.

Avery

2

Jim,

Do you remember “coby”? We had a laugh. Very best wishes for 957.

Harold

3

Nixie,

Deb said to write you. You know what I want to say. What is your answer?
The very best in 1604.

Frank

4

Dervilleen,

When will we see you? Bring butter if you can. God bless and best wishes for 1371.

Kratz

5

Joe,

Tyrone is upset with you about the horse. There's not much to do here. Happy 1749.

Campbell

6

Genna,

If you get this say so. We missed you at Christmas. Take care and best for 1410.

Anka

7

Millie,

Your violin case is being sent with Bertha. Can you collect it. Happy New Year from all at 41 and best wishes for 2032.

Terence

8

Francis,

I think you should listen to Molly. What's it like there? With every good wish for 1916.

Sarah

9

John,

Do you like these "boots"? I thought they'd suit fine. Thinking of you and wishing you all the best in 1799.

Grant

WE ARE CHANGING OUR NAME

From: The Turners

To: The Grislingbums

From: Green Apple Press

To: Throg Sludge Books

From: DWGD Associates

To: DGWD Associates

From: Emoryville

To: Tebchaws

From: The Pipe & Sprocket Company

To: Shalalalala Unicorn

From: The Municipality of Bock

To: Txaisywjtxeeb

From: Miranda M. Brown

To: Mrs. Pit Nin

HOSPITALITY

Please help yourself to the
Basmati Rice
Pipe Rigate N°91
Almond Slivers (half pack in extra bag)
Honey
Medium Egg Noodles (one block)
Plain Flour
Basmati Boil in Bag Rice
Finest Extra Virgin Olive Oil
Sesame Oil
Stoneground Coarse Oatmeal
Bread Soda
Herbs & Spices
Wheat Bran
Dried Chanterelles
Demerara Brown Sugar
Couscous
Self-raising Flour
Chick Peas
Arborio Rice
Rich Soya Sauce
Granulated Irish Sugar
Wheatgerm
Caster Sugar
Nutella
Sun-dried Tomato Paste
Creamed Coconut
Strong Irish Mustard
Natural Brown Rice

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Baking Powder
Bouillon
Vegetable Stock Cubes
Sea Salt
Cocktail Sticks
Or anything else you might find.

TEA

You will.

You will you will.

Ah you will.

You will you will you will you will you will.

You will.

Ah you will.

You will you will you will you will you will.

Ah go on.

You will.

You will?

Great stuff.

ALRIGHT

Dave's right & you're right Dave's right & you're right & I'm right
We're all right & I'm right & you're right & we're all alright &
Dave's a bit of all right & alright I'll write rightio Dave'll write &
I'll write & you'll write we'll all write alright that's right rightio
Dave'll write right-o & I'll write rightio & you'll write that's right
we'll all write rightio that's right we'll write right Dave'll write
& I'll write & you'll write & you're a bit of alright you're alright
right-o I'll write right you are write Dave'll right Dave's alright
I'm right & alright & I'll write write right alright I'll write right
That's right Dave Dave you you I I write right rightio that's right

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THINGS I'M GOOD AT

Smiling at children

[I intend to add to this list]

THINGS NOT GOOD AT

Names of flowers

Trees

Bird calls

Whistling

Snapping fingers

Omelettes

Suave

Soccer

Weights

Feng Shui

Languages

Lying

CUTLERY

In America pizza and burgers are popular because this food removes the need for forks so when you go out to eat you can be sure the fork you are using hasn't recently been lodged in someone else's fat mouth because you don't use a fork.

Those establishments which use plastic cutlery cater to the same repugnance: Plastic cutlery may be flimsy, ugly, and ecologically disastrous but generally speaking you can be sure it hasn't been in someone else's mouth before yours. Unless the owner of the establishment is European or otherwise non-American and is depraved enough to recycle plastic cutlery—something which would never occur to an American—and which adds “unhygienic” to the list of negative attributes above.

Speaking of Europeans, they like fine cutlery and take pride in sharing it in public and private settings because they feel they are, at base, all fundamentally related and racially more or less uniform.

I'm not qualified to discuss chopsticks.

When you invite someone into your home in America it is better to offer finger-food as this reduces the risk involved in inviting someone in. It's actually more hospitable to offer finger-food, more democratic, as it allows one to invite in people whom would not invite in if one had to offer them the use of one's cutlery.

A man wanting to leave his family begins to find fault with their cutlery. He admires the cutlery of others and thinks it cleaner and more gleaming than his own. He neglects to clean his forks and disdains to use them, even scoffing at them to people outside his family.

I want to share my cutlery with you. We can buy new spoons and knives and forks if you like and start anew. I want to stand beside you over suds. I want to cook with you and do grocery shopping and organize the recycling. I won't talk here about our clothes spinning together in the washing machine and tumbling in the dryer but I want that too.

AT THE Y

fierce dark triangle
at junction of thighs
smooth body streaming
from cubicle—
oh glorious sight

MEET STEVE

This is Steve. Don't let the Anglo name fool you. Steve's name is really Stefan. And don't let that fool you either. Steve looks a lot like Franky G. in *Wonderland*. Uh-huh. Steve is a fireman and a realtor, both full-time.

Steve is a good-tempered man. He's not one to whine. Steve is the sort of guy who puts others' needs before his own. You know the type: he'll bring you chicken noodle soup in bed even when he's got the flu himself. He's just kind & generous & considerate. I know guys like Steve are a dime a dozen but for me there's just something kinda special about Steve.

Steve is also a part-time Dell technician. If you spill ginger ale on your laptop for example, Steve's your man. Steve runs a workshop from his backyard. There's very little he can't fix. Computers, cars, plumbing, electrical work: all fun & games to Steve. Steve is willing & able to help with light construction, insulation, window winterizing, any sort of painting & decoration, and of course—hauling out the garbage. He's a good cook and, from his time in the Navy, knows how to keep a kitchen—and a house—spick and span. Steve might be the only man you ever meet who'll gladly clean a toilet—and do a more thorough job than you.

Of course it's not all hard work & decency with Steve. He's a demon in bed. You know the sort of strong, powerful guy who's also very gentle. Very passionate, very sexual, very loving, very affectionate. He's one of those guys who can't stop cuddling. The only thing he likes more than a cuddle is a good chat. Or better still a simultaneous cuddle & chat. He's a hell of a listener, is Steve. Probably his strongest point however is his insatiable appetite for sex.

And he's a wonderful father. You know, one of those very loving, gentle men who spend time with their children, trying to put the little tykes first. I'm not

saying it's easy but he's always there for them, even with the fireman and realtor jobs, the workshop in the garage, and bubble-baths with me. He's just a truly great father. You know the type.

Well I guess you probably know a million guys like Steve so I won't go on and on about him. That's it from me.

2 BRICKS & MORTAR

DOOR

When you left
it was as if
one wall of the house
was taken down

I walked out
through that large door
into the carnival
world.

SAVINGS

I know there's no money in the Checking Account.
I'm talking about the Savings Account.
No, not *that* Savings Account.
The Savings Account.
The Savings Account with the accumulated savings.
The one in the dark.
The one we don't touch.
The one behind the other one.
Remember?
The Savings Account behind the other Savings Account.
That one.
Yes.
How much is in there?

RECENTLY PURCHASED WORDS

Dry wall
Vinyl siding
Horsehair plaster
Rockwool
Knob & tube
Plastic romex
Double-tapped
Circuit-breaker
GFCI
Asphalt shingle
Flashing
Valleys
Valley rafter
Weep hole
Downspout
Roll roofing
Spalling
Repoint
Caulk & grout
Replacement windows
Forced air
Heat exchanger
Heat register
Breezeway
Soffit trim

PEEL-A-WAY

The fear of black
peels away to lay bare
the fear of lead paint
peels away to lay bare
the fear of duplicity
peels away to lay bare
the fear of rats
peels away to lay bare
the fear of ruin
peels away to lay bare
the fear of cancer
peels away to lay bare
the fear of cruelty
peels away to lay bare
the fear of responsibility
peels away to lay bare
The fear of black

PROBLEMS DOUBLED & HALVED

Rats.

Feral cats.

Lead poisoning.

Cancer.

Job loss.

Recapture Tax.

Debt.

Death.

THE PRESENT

In whom to confide about exhaust manifold gasket, replacement cost of

With whom to exult

In whom to confide about meningitis, possibility of, fear of

With whom to exult

In whom to confide about mortgage, pre-approval for

With whom to exult

In whom to confide about credit score

With whom to exult

In whom to confide about contract renewal, anxiety regarding

With whom to exult

With whom to exult about interest rates

In whom to confide

With whom to exult about poems, published

In whom to confide

With whom to exult about Tomaz Salamun, to read with

In whom to confide

With whom to exult about Kenneth Goldsmith, praised by

In whom to confide

With whom to exult about children

In whom to confide

With whom to exult

ANSWERS TO THE PRESENT

Mechanic.

Physician.

Realtor.

Loan officer.

Peer.

Pass.

Poetry.

Poetry.

Poetry.

Children.

Friends.

This one and that.

RED LETTER DAY

Well, today was a red letter day for sure because the team of experts I have waited for so long finally arrived. After all this time it just happened. Just a doorbell *ping*& they all clomped in. You could have knocked me down with a feather. They were all there: The plumber, the electrician, the car mechanic, the carpenter, the lead paint woman, the swim instructor, the HTML woman, the flash woman, the sound guy, the therapist, the ethicist, the contractor, the gardener, the tax guy, the retirement guy, the doc, the vet, the wise guy, even the consultant—to make sure all bases are covered. It got quite dark when they all came in but I was smiling fit to burst. It was quite the party. Things are finally gonna get moving around here. They've just gone out for some pizza so I grabbed time to write this. Now I got to make up some beds.

WHAT CAN YOU DO

Everything has been so easy for me I just can't believe it. I was a single mother—or *Lone Parent* as they say—for 4 years in Ireland & got Rent Allowance in a lump sum after 9 months of ineligibility because I was doing a teaching diploma. I got to teach without getting paid because if I got paid I would have lost my *Lone Parent Allowance*. Which is fair enough. Things were just so easy teaching & studying & being a *Lone Parent* & totally penniless that I even got to write poetry. It was so cool but that's Ireland, lover of poetry.

When I came to America things were pretty easy too. I had \$400 with me and was able to teach & get paid \$800 a month for 10 months of the year though I didn't actually get paid for a few months & then \$1400 a year was taken out for health insurance for myself and my daughter. But it was cool. I did all the exams & stuff & taught & moved around a lot & got jobs & wrote poetry & it was all made pretty darned easy for me I must say. Sometimes I get mad and think: You know what—women have it easy. And of all the women on the earth, single mothers have it best. **THEY GET THE WIC COUPONS. THEY GET THE GRAPE NUTS.** Immigrants have it easy. They get noticed with their accents. Yeah immigrants & single mothers have it easy. Minorities have it easy. They get the breaks & they get the jobs. Sometimes I feel bad because life has dealt me such an easy hand. I feel I will never really know what I am made of, what sort of stuff is really there. At those times I got to admit I find myself wishing I was a white male or something—no a white male—just to see what life is like on a level playing field & how I'd tackle it. God I hope I'd do okay. I got the ... uh ...ah ... I got the Earned Income Credit for years. I remember the very moment I heard about it. It was at one of those VITA sites (wouldn't you know: I was getting free tax help too). Shit. Then I went and had another child. Now I'm a single mother squared. Of course I have a job now. And yeah I get invited onto panels because they need a woman to flesh things out. It's okay but sometimes I wish I could have done it the hard way.

I think of all the assistant professors out there, all the poets who got there
fair & square come hell or high water no kids to buoy them down no breaks
no easy outs just partners at the ready with guacamole and parents with intru-
sive bankrolls: I'd soon know *what's what* then.

BIRDSONG

Birds are lucky they have feathers & hearts & eyes. If they had batteries or had to be plugged in they would be considered very annoying. Or maybe I mean that I'm lucky to see birds in terms of feathers & hearts. Because otherwise I'd be going nuts right now listening to their repetitive waxing of the already teeming sound texture of this neighborhood. I'm talking about cars blossoming into noise trumpets as they scrape past my front door and the denser jumble of traffic cooling at the lights on Academy & Chalkstone; children at recess at George West, their voices pink and white balloons kept in the air by so many small batting hands; motorbikes—bald engines ridden by humans who look like cars; buses like great boars, oozing from the mouth, bristling & charging; planes swan-diving or soaring into garlands of their own importance, pulling contrails of blasted ear-drums; police sirens, fire-trucks, ambulances; jack-hammers—all that fun noise boys get to make when they grow up; male roars; car alarm medleys; chimes; belch of rap from open car window; relentless bass throb from up the street; wonky window fan next door; howling dogs, wailing babies, cats on the prowl and yowling; church bells doing their old routine, insane lawnmowers, leaf and snow blowers, all that cacophony without which no American urban neighborhood would be tolerable to Americans. I'm European. Into this noise mush push birds with their one or two-note calling cards. How to describe that tedious *cheep-cheep*? Old rubber squeegees pressed across dirty windows. A skipping-rope bellowing with insects. The sound equivalent of fish-eye jelly. Clockwork breathing. Broken bits of chalk pulled across the great greasy board of the sky. When it comes down to it, birds, like bluebottles & cicadas, are more machine than animal. Rather than being associated with natural phenomena, e.g. *new-mown hay* or *branchful of cherry-blossom*, they should be classified as *motorized vehicle* or *small appliance*. All I'm saying is that it's just as well birds have already got a reputation. Because if you were to hear them for the first time—at least the kind around Mount Pleasant in Providence where I live—

with absolutely fresh ears what would you think? I mean *what would you think?* Is there a chance in hell that you'd think that squeaking melodious or enjoyable in any way or even bearable? And what if I told you that what was making that noise was not actually birds, those small feathered wild creatures we know and love, but anti-theft alarms for cell-phones or dandelion-zappers or electronic oxygen counters for emphysemic neighbors or devices for monitoring dripping faucets or freckle massagers or electric whiskers for fairy cakes? What would you think then?

GO TO SLEEP

Go to sleep suddenly
Go to sleep pronto
Go to sleep now
Go to sleep
Sleep!
Immediatement!
Go to sleep
Sleep Sleep Sleep
Schlepp to sleep
Subito
Go to sleep
Sleep now
High-jump into sleep
Vault to sleep
Canter into sleep
Gallop to sleep
Quickly
I say do a 100-meter dash to sleep
Race to sleep
Do not collect \$100
Do not pass Go
Sleep!
Do not pack bags
Fly to sleep
Carry on your baggage
Do not check in
Check out
Now
Hurtle into sleep

Take the Concorde
Wrestle sleep down
Rummage
Tunnel into sleep
Leap
No kidding
Get there
Git
Vamoose
GO!

TO MY CHILDREN

Why
would you need
pets?

Don't
you have
candles?

SOS POETRY

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SINGLE MOTHER

I am the Easter Bunny.

I am Santa Claus.

DOWNTOWN CROSSING

A cup of coffee can be a mother.

A cigarette can be a mother.

A blanket can be a mother.

A wool cap can be a mother.

A coat can be a mother.

A booth can be a mother.

A warm grating can be a mother.

You can be your own mother.

TO CONQUER FEAR

Put a big prize on the other side of fear:

Heaven
On the other side of death

Home
On the other side of the snowstorm

An address
On the other side of this tangle of streets

THE DAY

Himalayan peaks

Smith Street

cucumber slice

44 West again

silver-grey light

my intersection my traffic-light

3 STUDIO WORK

PITCH

Okay so there's this poet—Gerard Manley Hopkins—who's a priest, a convert, his family are a little starchy about that, and he's marooned in Ireland for part of the movie. He does his best to be Welsh in Wales and Irish in Ireland but ends up dead of exhaustion and damp instead. And there's this other poet—Robert Bridges—and he's really mediocre and bombastic but what do you know he's incredibly successful and fêted and honored, poet laureate and everything, and get this: Gerald and Robert carry on a lifelong friendship. What do you think? Two poets, one (Bridges (hey maybe we could get Jeff Bridges to play him)) honored in his lifetime and completely forgotten now more or less. And the other (Hopkins (Bono? Ralph Fiennes? Marty Feldman? Martin Short?)) completely obscure in his lifetime but blazing like an acetylene torch right through the 20th century to the 21st. Can you see it? Ralph Fiennes as GMH slaving away grading papers in the depths of Newman House in the coldest wettest winter in Irish history. OK maybe uh John Lynch as Fr. Hopkins. Maybe uh that Heathcliffy guy Rufus Sewell. Hey maybe Helena Bonham-Carter! That'd be something. Well definitely Bridges as Bridges. Sort of like *Thelma & Louise* slash *Chariots of Fire* slash *Fairies at the Bottom of the Garden* or whatever that movie was called—hey man this is **DYNAMITE!**

PITCH

Okay so there's this woman, let's say Catherine Zeta-Jones, and she's buying a house, so she finds this house and it's really beautiful, everything you could want so she goes to get a mortgage—no hang on—actually here's the thing: she's already pre-approved. So get this: *she's already pre-approved* but she doesn't have a realtor. She's found the house by herself. So okay now she has to find a realtor. That's the sub-plot. There's this realtor and that realtor—four realtors—and none of them works out until eventually she finds Sam (think Matthew Broderick so the chemistry's not there but there's a Johnny Depp type later on). Meanwhile the results of the inspection and appraisal come in and everything's looking good. Okay so picture this: Catherine Zeta-Jones is saving furiously, can't even buy lunch anymore so she passes out at the check-out in *Au Bon Pain* just as she's counting pennies for coffee and she's revived by, you got it, the Johnny Depp type who is actually a banker standing in line. So he has the inside scoop on interest rates about to go down. They have lunch and she refinances at a better rate. Then the bomb hits: property taxes go up and Catherine's budget is out of whack. So Catherine and Matthew and Johnny all go down to City Hall where they meet with endless officials. Well that's really material for the sequel actually. The sequel is more of an action flick. This one is straight romance. What do you think?

PITCH

Okay. So it's the mid-17th century in Holland right. There's this ah 46-year-old fuzzy-headed arthritic maid-of-all-work and she goes to work in the home of a famous painter, sort of like Vermeer, actually it is Vermeer. And the 46-year-old fuzzy-headed arthritic maid-of-all-work and Vermeer develop this extraordinary friendship based on their mutual reverence for art. Yeah. Even though the fuzzy-headed 46-year-old arthritic maid-of-all-work is totally uneducated & poverty-stricken she just has this natural talent for composition & understanding the artist's soul. Vermeer recognizes it in her & reverences her for it. I mean Vermeer reverences her reverence for it right. But Vermeer the artist (thirtyish) is married to this 25-year old woman who's already had like 5 children, 3 of whom have died and she's pregnant again. So Vermeer takes her great big pearl earrings & gives them to the maid-of-all-work so he can paint her portrait. For this patron. Who's a disgusting rapist character totally unlike the refined artist Vermeer. (Of course nobody remembers the patron's name. Van something or other.) So everybody thinks things are smoking up in the studio between the artist & the maid-of-all-work. But actually they're just mixing pigment & pointing out intricacies of light & shade. It's very beautiful. So in the end the painter gives the 46-year-old arthritic fuzzy-headed maid-of-all-work his wife's earrings. It's very realistic & shows how a simple & profound reverence for art transcends age class gender & all other barriers no problem what do you think?

SOS POETRY

MAIRÉAD BYRNE

SMALL SCULPTURE 1

On the couch the whole family sits
Strapped in with safety belts.

SMALL SCULPTURE 2

This is a short thick plait of wire, hair, wool, hemp, cotton, and elasticized thread. Colors lean toward brown, rust, mud, bark. A single strand of gold elasticated thread is woven through the plait, much like a plump thread-worm; also several strands of yellow cotton. The plait is tied at both ends; the wires and fibers emerging chaotically from one end are tacky and glopped together with sealing wax, glue, and dried blood. The effect is of a bundle of severed veins and arteries, some wasted (fiber, wool, hemp), some stained (cotton thread, elasticated thread), some still very perky (wire), some imperious (hair). There is also a suggestion of cartilaginous body parts, e.g., larynx, fallopian tubes, cochlea, ligaments, spinal cord.

Materials: plaited wire, hair, fiber, wool, hemp, elasticized thread, sealing wax, glue, dried blood.

A JUG FULL OF MILK

A jug full of milk

A jug full of creamy milk

A jug full of milk with a buttery head on it

A jug full of milk like a stagnant pond

A blue and white banded jug

A blue and white banded jug with a yellowish-purplish glaze inside, with sandiness

A jug full of milk with a hair in it

A jug full of milk with a thick black horse hair like a wire

A jug full of milk with a coarse black horse hair

A jug full of creamy milk which tilted leaves a loose creamy skin clinging to its inside curve

A jug full of milk

MILK BOTTLES

Heavy milk bottles with thick rolled lips a quarter of an inch thick

Milk bottles with raised writing

Milk bottles embossed with “Premier Dairies”

Milk bottles with orange foil caps

Milk bottles full of milk with cream stoles riding on white dresses

Milk bottles on steps with orange foil caps punctured by sparrows’ downward plunging beaks

Milk bottles full and empty

Milk bottles on the step gathering sun

Milk bottles with soapy bubbles carrying rainbows inside

Milk bottles with drops of condensation

The clank of milk bottles washed

Empty milk bottles on the step

ANOTHER SELF-PORTRAIT

pinwheels
 pinwheelspinwheels
 PINWHEELS!!!PINWHEELS!!!!pinwheels!*****pinwheels*****
 *****PINWHEELS!!!!!!!!!!*pinwheels* ***pinwheels!
 ****pinwheels!******
 PINWHEELS!!!!!!PINWHEELS!!!!!!*****PINWHEELS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!*****
 *****PINWHEELS*****
 pinwheels***PINWHEELS*****!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!*PINWHEELS!!!!!!*****
 ******pinwheels*
 ******pinwheels******
pinwheels!!!!PINWHEELS!!!!!!***PINWHEELS*******
*pinwheels****pinwheels!***PINwheels!!!!!!pinWHEELS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!P
 INWHEELS!!!!!!
 !!!!!!!!!!!!!
 PINWHEELS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!PINWHEELS*****
PINWHEELS!PINWHEELS!!!!!!*****
 *****PINWHEELS!*****

INVENTIONS: THE HANDY EVERYMOTHER ZONE-OUT CAPACITATOR

This handy device pumps out standard mother issue “I Don’t Know” responses every 15 seconds, deflecting the child’s steady stream of questions *away* from the mother freeing her from constant jaw-ache, numbness, feelings of uselessness & endemic ignorance, & the sense of being tethered to a stump when all she wants to do is rise into the blue ether, while also satisfying the child’s ongoing need for attention, reassurance, and news from the kingdom of adults.

The Handy EveryMother Zone-Out Capacitor CAN BE ATTACHED TO

keychain, belt, collar, or secreted in purse much like a cell phone **ADJUSTABLE** volume **COMES IN 5 SEPARATE TONES:** “Honey,” “Brusque,” “Speculative,” “Firm,” and Playful” **PROGRAMMABLE** “Periods of Non-Response” mimic real life: *Your child will not be unnerved by any sense of robotic or unmommylike response*

Testimonials

“I could zone out for quite long periods and Willy continued to scamper along beside me chattering away” —Joan, Pawtucket

“My Handy EveryMother Zone-Out Capacitor” actually had a very deep voice which I do think Duart noticed but soon adjusted to” —Irena, Skowhegan

“I’m a moral theologian so occasionally need some decompression time. The Handy EveryMother Zone-Out Capacitor allows me to collect the twins from school without being scared my head will break” —Sandy, Fall River

When Your Brain Waves Must Run Along Parallel Tracks The Handy EveryMother Zone-Out Capacitor Can Make Those Synapses Snap!

(Note to Self: Shorten Slogan)

EMPLOYMENT

for Michael Phillips & William Blake

Using the same black ink
Using the same pen and ink
Using fine dark charcoal black ink
Using the same pen & light sepia ink
Using the same pen and pale grey ink
Using the same fine nib & light sepia ink
Using the same pen and charcoal black ink
Using the same pen and thin medium-grey ink
Using a finely sharpened nib and charcoal black ink
Using the same finely sharpened nib and coal black ink
Using the same sharp quill and medium grey ink
Using the same nib and charcoal black ink
Using the same pen & medium grey ink
Using the same pen and dark grey ink
Using the same charcoal grey ink
Using the same pale grey ink
Using the side of his nib
Using black ink

YEAR AGE LIFE*for J.D.*

1572 Birth in London
1576 **4** Death of father
1577 **5** Death of sister Elizabeth
1581 **9** Death of sisters Mary & Katherine
1588 **16** Death of stepfather
1593 **21** Death of brother Henry
1603 **31** Daughter Constance born
1604 **32** Son John born
1605 **33** Third child George born
1607 **35** Fourth child Francis born
1608 **36** Fifth child Lucy born
1609 **37** Sixth child Bridget born
1611 **39** Seventh child Mary born
1612 **40** Eighth child stillborn
1613 **41** Ninth child Nicholas born, dies
1614 **42** Deaths of children Mary & Francis
1615 **43** Tenth child Margaret born
1616 **44** Eleventh child Elizabeth born
1617 **45** Twelfth child stillborn; death of wife Ann
1627 **55** Death of daughter Lucy
1631 **59** Dies

STOP

THAT'S ENOUGH **STOP** I HAVE FOUND EVERYTHING I'M INTERESTED IN **STOP** FREDERICK DOUGLASS FAMINE FLUXUS CONCRETE VISUAL SOUND KINETIC CYBERNETIC POETRY HOPKINS SWENSON TOLSON HUGHES ITALY MAINE NATIVITY CHILDBIRTH METAPHOR EXAMPLE KOSOVO IRAQ **STOP** IRAQ **STOP** IRAQ I HAVE TO HIBERNATE NOW A THOUSAND YEARS I AM MOVING INTO THE INTERNET I AM MOVING INTO THE FUNNY FURRY HILLS OF MY BLOG **STOP** I AM FLEEING FROM LIFE OUT THERE INTO LIFE IN HERE **STOP** WHERE EVERYTHING IS FLUID & SLICK & SHADY & DUSKY & FLAT

4 SOS POETRY

PREAMBLE

Okay

Okay

Okay

[DEEP BREATH]

Whoooooo

Is it okay?

Is that okay?

[TAP MIKE]

[TAP MIKE]

Okay?

[SHUFFLE PAGES & START WALKING AWAY WITH THEM]

[TURN BACK TO AUDIENCE]

[RETREAT SOME]

[TURN TOWARD AUDIENCE BLINKING & STILL SHUFFLING &
FACIAL EXPRESSION *How did I get here?*]

Uh hi William

[HUGE BREATH MORE HUNTING THROUGH PAGES]

[DEEP BREATH]

Okay.

I HAVE DEDICATED MY LIFE TO WRITING POETRY

I've been writing poetry for 30 years now. Well really more like 1 year if you count the actual time spent writing. A long time ago a poet named Paul Durcan told me to write every day, even if only for 20 minutes. I decided 20 minutes was a spurious amount of time to spend writing. I wouldn't insult poetry with such a paltry assignation of time. So I can't say I've written poetry for 20 minutes every day for 30 years, even if you only count weekdays. If I had though, I would have written 219,150 minutes worth of poetry, factoring in 7.5 Leap Days. Doesn't *factoring in* sound good, I hope it's correct usage. That's 91 40-hour weeks plus 1 hour and 15 mins left over if I'm not mistaken and I possibly am. The point is: that's damn close to 2 full years of poetry-writing, given 3 weeks vacation time per year. And if you use the more general 35-hour week, you get 2 straight years no holidays—or with holidays 2 years and 6 weeks again presuming I'm not mistaken which is more than possible. Mind you I'm making these calculations based on 20 minutes a day 7 days a week because I believe that's the way Paul intended it, that's the kind of guy he was. He told me once that he worked only one full day in his life: as a reporter in the *Irish Press*. I think he meant a day straight though as he went in to resign the next day that might count. But whatever way you look at it, 40-hr week or the more relaxed 35, that's a lot of poetry writing. Okay so 30 years is also a lot of years. Fair point. That's the time it takes to pay off a mortgage on a house. A 30-year mortgage that is. But if you think of it, it's not so long because the time spent actually paying off the mortgage is relatively short. It can't be more than say 5 minutes a month. I mean how long does it take to pull out a checkbook? Okay maybe a little longer: There can be psychological barriers & domestic turmoil. But seriously, maybe 5 minutes to find your checkbook, 5 minutes to find the bank's demand letter, 5 minutes to wince, 5 minutes to write the check, 5 minutes to wince some more (did you ever notice *some* is almost an anagram for *more* except it would be *mose* instead of *more*?), 5 minutes to find an envelope & I'm not going to

count time spent looking for a stamp or going to the post office because:

- You may just have a stamp handy
- You may have stumbled across a stamp in the course of all your other fumbblings
- You were probably going to the post office anyway or at least saved the mortgage payment letter until you were
- You may not have used the double time to wince or even if you did you may not have used the full 5 minutes each time because let's face it that's a lot of wince more of a *wrench* or a *cramp* even so you could use that freed-up time to find or even buy the stamp (presuming you were in the post office).

So there you go: 30 minutes maximum a month to pay a 30-year mortgage—hey and I'm 30 this is getting spooky.... That's 6 hours a year and 180 hours over the life of the mortgage as they say which amounts to 4.5 working weeks at 40 hours per week or 5 full weeks and 1 hour at 35 hours a week. So don't scoff at 2 years writing poetry! It hands down beats just a little over a month to pay a 30-year mortgage. And it's not nearly so consuming of resources, in any way shape or form no matter how much light or heat you use or how much whiskey you drink.

But anyway, I never took Paul Durcan's advice. For most of those 30 years, writing poetry has been a pretty *desultory* activity for me. That's changed in the last year. Now I write every day, even if only for a few minutes on the run or in the car or on the way to a neighbor's backyard to pick up Clio from a birthday party or whatever. Still, my total time spent over 30 years is probably less than 1 year of 35-hour, no maybe 40-hour weeks. To be fair, I cannot complain. Today my book is ranked 997,731st on Amazon.com. If I was a piano-player—that doesn't sound right: If I is a piano-player—that's not right either... Were I a pianist, I'd have been practicing every day for 6 hours. Over 30 years that pretty damn near amounts to—30 years. I'd be off the poetry charts at Amazon. People would be queueing...quing...queu... lining

up to hear me play. I'd know all the Halls – Carnegie, Joan, Faneuil, Royal Albert. I'd wear only dicky-bows. But anyway (finally) I'd say I write now for about an hour a day. That means in the course of 1 month I could pay off *two* 30 year mortgages. And they say poetry doesn't pay. That blows my mind.

PUBLISHING HORSES

Wince Press
Bosra Sham & Company
Hatoof Books
Ma Biche Poetry
El Gran Senor Publishing Co
Wollow Books
Bolkonski & Company
Bobbyio Books
Lord Gyllene Publishing, Inc
Mr. Frisk Press
Last Suspect Press
Hallo Dandy Books
Red Rum Books
Nicolas Silver Publications
Oxo Books
Freebooter Press
Master Oats Press
The Thinker Press
Dawn Run Press
Little Owl Books
Rooster Booster Books
Flakey Dove Publishing
Kribensis Press
Arkle House
Night Nurse & Co
Reams of Verse Press
Diminuendo Press
Circus Plume Books
Galileo Press

Benny the Dip Books
Quest for Fame Poetry Series
Secret Books
Shergar Press
Never Say Die Books
Nimbus Press
Mutafaweq Poetry Press
Nedawi & Co
Classic Cliche Books
Son of Love Books
Snurge Press

TITLES FOR FUTURE WORKS

Buckwheat Cakes.

Little Breeches.

The Dead Baby.

Jim Bludsoe.

Two Sharpshooters.

Three Saints.

We Are Coming, Father.

Poet Let Loose.

Topside Gullah.

My Little Wife.

Pat and Biddy.

Adoon the Lane.

Done For.

Autumn.

Moss.

The Old Canoe.

Three Bugs.

Smack in School.

Desolate.

EXPLANATION FOR MY POETRY

I write in the Emergency Room
I write in bed
I write in the top bunk
I write in the car
I write on the plane
I write on Michigan Avenue
I write in the Art Institute
I write in the meeting rooms
I write in my king-size bed
I write on the RIPTA bus
I write on the elevator
I write on the escalator
I write on the el
& the moving walkway
I write at the gate
I write at the gas station
I write in the bath
I write on the couch
I write in the doctor's waiting room
I write in the supermarket
I write in the video store
I write in Clio's school
I write on the way home
I write on the sidewalk
I write on the street
I write on the bench as she swings
I write in the snow
I hold down the pages when the wind blows
I write in the Architecture building
I write in the Y
I write on the bleachers beside the pool

I write in the dressing-room
I write on my laptop
I write on my blog
I write in my little hard-back notebook
I write with my pen
I write with Clio's blunt pencil
I write with whatever comes to hand
I write on my hand
I write late at night
I write when I'm half asleep
I write when I'm half-awake
I write for the hell of it
I write when I can

PAYMENT

Even with the kisses,
the joys,
the good roof over our heads,
my life
could be considered hard.

But I get paid also in poems.

LETTER HOME

I have not become fluent in the language of the dollar,
nor any of the languages spoken here.
In this envelope you will find a poem.

POEM

Small
white flowers
with green stems
nosing
deep into chunky
watery
green glass jar
planted
in prison classroom
by kind teacher's
hand

WHEN YOU KISS THE WORLD

in a poem

you take its long throat

& fuck

so deep

you come

out

laughing

straight up

into

the bright face

of

God

AND FINALLY

I have never been sorry
to hear those words
at a poetry reading.

TRADITIONAL~IRISH~POEM

The next poem is a poem I got from a great fiddle-player James Kelly of Capel Street one night in Inis Oirr when he was out there playing with John Blake, a wonderful musician too. You might hear hints of a poet who has influenced us all Willie Yeats who had a castle there in Thoor Ballylee many's the grand night we had there with George and Anne and Michael a great family—that was before the summer school. And I'm indebted of course to Paddy Kavanagh from Iniskeen and Baggot Street, the sweetest melodeon player you ever did hear that used to play there up in McDaid's and Nesbitt's I was there hanging on every note. And all the great sessions around Dublin and Dundalk that are recorded on the old 78s I remember the excitement when a new batch of them would be brought home and fair play to all the men and women who collected them. It's through them I heard the music of Allen Ginsberg of Newark New Jersey and Alan Dugan from Brooklyn New York and Allen Grossman in Baltimore there and Alan Sondheim of Manhattan Island and all the Allens, a magnificent family, second only to the Alices. And Charles Reznikoff a great walker also of New York, and Harry Crane from Chagrin Falls and Sukey Howe—her mother was a *Manning*—and Fanny her sister, felicitous poets both, and May Swenson that we all loved and Muriel too, and Langston Hughes up there in Harlem, I tried to get him to come to Áras Éanna many's the time but no dice and Gus Young in London and Trevor Joyce who published Gus and Trevor's Uncle Jimmy a truly great poet though not necessarily when he said so and Marcel Duchamp and Pierre Reverdy and Artie Rimbaud and Paul Muldoon his *Incantata* was only massive and Paul Celan with his *Todesfuge* and Paulie Durcan from Leinster Square a very prolific poet and all the Pauls, another great family. And Tom Raworth God bless him and Hugo Ball and Randolph Healy from outside Bray and Micheál Ó hAirtnéid from Newcastlewest no longer with us unfortunately but a wonderful poet and player we remember fondly and Ger Hopkins that

used work up there in Newman House on his sprung rhythm and Eavan out in Dundrum many's the cup of coffee I had at her kitchen counter and Crystal Williams I played with her in the Big Red Barn one time at Cornell it was powerful and Rachel Loden in San Francisco and Gabriel Gudding with whom I wrote *The Clio Reel* some of you may know it we're still dancing to that one. So for all the men and women of poetry and John Donne here goes:

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