

Conor O'Callaghan

LIVE STREAMING



Gallery Books

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for my four brothers

'Hearts of one purpose . . .'

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Grace

They're coming to collect
the table I'm writing on.
They texted a while ago
to say they were leaving
a suburb four miles south.
Midweek, early evening:
traffic should be light.
I thought of sitting here
in gratitude, once more,
as long as supper lasts.
VINTAGE JOB LOT. My ad
hung weeks unanswered
in the whole foods co-op.
Then yesterday they called
to ask if I'd sell piecemeal.
Happily. The sun has drifted
slantwise of our building.
In the back lane behind me
two kitchen porters smoke
in what could be Cantonese.
For six years my things have
waited for the party I was
always threatening to throw.
There's the door . . .

They've been
and gone and bought the lot!
They were tremendously sweet:
she, Flemish, full of chat;
a fiancé with beard and bearing
of some prince in waiting.
They came for my table just
and took a shine to everything.
We laughed and lugged it all
to her employer's truck

parked running in the lane,
shook hands, wished luck
and hugged, for heaven's sake.
I came indoors to find
this notebook open on the floor
beneath my broken bread.
Thank you sideboard fetched
halfway across the Fens.
Thank you captain's chest,
handmade plywood bed,
mess benches from the war.
Thanks to all those friends
I shipped on for a song.
Thank you rooms in shade
that might yet prove to be
night already happening.
Thank you echoes echoing.
I have more hope in me
than I'd have ever guessed.

Trailer Park Études

THE STARS

The nights midweek are secrets kept.
No soul on site, no signal/bars,
and zilch for company except
a zillion bright disarming stars.

I'll flit through ambers, quicker, higher.
I'll break each hamlet's STOP or YIELD.
I'll fix some noodles, start a fire
and climb up to the topmost field.

The stars at first are sparse, unclear.
They surface in that drag between
the darkened grass and stratosphere,
the powder blue and bottle green.

They blossom, thick and fast, in droves.
They pulse, in clusters, magnify.
The smoke that's my potbelly stove's
frays outwards through each needle eye.

I'll head below. I'll char till dawn
some apple logs down to their core.
By pewter light when stars have gone
I'll do a bit, a little more.

THE RAIN

You live inside its sound effects
whole weeks on end: its pin machine,
its cardboard drum, its soft-boiled eggs,
its silent-running submarine.

It's like the god of liquid rub-
ber stirred at dawn to slip downstairs
and sip a cigarette, to drub
his fingertips on solid layers

you poured across last summer's drought.
You love it, learn to, as it slows,
and even as you come to doubt
its dribs and drabs and pigeon toes.

Forget the welcome rain outstayed.
For days the leaves are parchment sheet
and wind hangs chimeless in the shade.
Still rain remains the point of heat.

The rain is near. Like everything,
it's best those seconds just before:
the broadleaf's backwards canvas sling,
the fly strip flapping through the door.

THE WIND

The wind's this ancient bloke below
who chunters 'we', who wheezes 'us',
though no one else will come or go.
You want to ask the wind 'Who's *us*?'

but hold your tongue till, in your head,
the wind and him have somehow mixed,
the type of wind that loves a shed
and banging on of things not fixed:

a belt-and-braces year-round wind,
a kiln-dried cobwebbed hardwood wind,
a greenhouse wind, a treebound wind,
an end-of-season car-boot wind,

a padlocked shower unit wind,
an upturned wheelie dumpster wind,
a channel not quite tuned-in wind,
a hollow flight-path thunder wind,

a dog-eared wind, a knocked sign wind,
a spouseless phantom ocean-blown
autumnal graveyard Scots pine wind
who speaks in plurals, moves alone.

THE GRASS

One night last June, in cups, in love
with pickled gin from bubbly flutes,
our clothes in coils about the stove,
we climbed the dark in birthday suits.

It's true! The grass was mown that day.
Like hippies chained in meadow flowers
we tripped above the cut and lay
in blades of petrol suede for hours.

We listened to the lowing black.
We giggled, kissed. We possumed dead.
We woke as flesh and straggled back
like beasts to parlour, dressed, then read.

We trafficked grass in bedspreads, shoes,
and never spoke of that again
through winter's interregnum blues,
of being spooked by skin, of when

the only care we had was grass,
the only stir for miles around
our freezing bones, our clinking glass,
our dying to be rumbled, found.