

Derek Mahon

**RISING
LATE**

*Paintings and drawings
by Donald Teskey*



Gallery Books

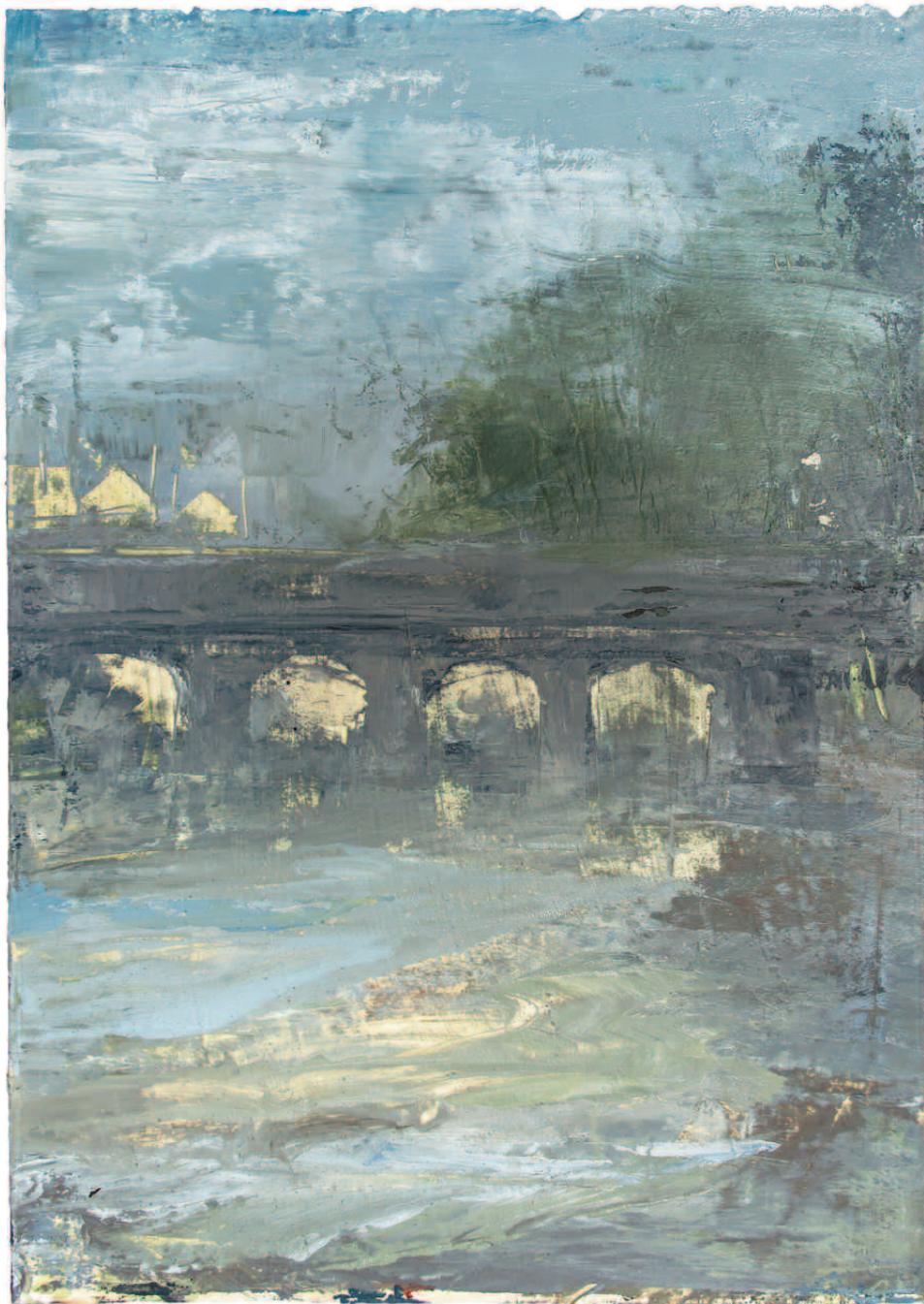
Horizons

Night wind — a continual, baffled aspirate —
wanders the water like a vagrant spirit
seeking repose but there is no repose
till morning, when the tide withdraws
from exposed depths to the south-west
with its imaginary Islands of the Blest.

A straight line, wherever the edge may be,
confines and also opens up the sea
to ancient shipwreck, drowned forest,
lost continents and nuclear waste.
You hear a different music of the spheres
depending where you stand on these quiet shores.

Relatedly, beyond the blue horizon,
beyond the rising and declining sun
are more horizons, and among real waves
the line recedes to infinite alternatives
before the final hot sand or pack ice.
Nobody clears the same horizon twice.

Same thing with time. When you were twenty-one
you took it for granted you would die young
as genius should. Now that you're seventy-five,
sails idly fluttering, but still alive,
you sit becalmed, imagining the many
horizons past and those to come if any.



Bridges

The narrow road bridge up at Cushendun was where we gathered when the day was done back in the fifties. Peaty water raced past trailing branches, tackle, and dispersed to late-summer tides at the sand spit. Stars shone in the leaves at night.

Girls on the bridge, men at the nets, seagulls planing in and out of the Antrim hills — it was one of those lasting primal scenes in sparkling definition, glimpsed again from boardwalks on the Thames and Seine, high bridges over gorges and ravines;

and the one linking Crane's two shores to prove bright theorem and entelechy from above dockside, freighter and barge, the brief pedestrianism of the quotidian life — sun on a hundred windows, icy wings, a rainbow shining in a flight of strings.

A Clearing

A clearing in a wood
beyond technology, with two
car doors disintegrating in the ditch;
a listening light, domain of fox and witch
and, stiff with sudden tension, you
who dubiously intrude.

The glade, an open space
alive with immanent potential, pours
impersonal warmth into your narrow field
of sense; but something vital is withheld.
You wait, but nothing notable occurs
in this mysterious place —

or seems to occur, although
a wood-wide web is hard at work
reporting on your mischievous invasion
while secret presences obscured by sun,
revealed by shade, define the dark
and shine with their own glow.

What on earth shall we do
with this silent conventicle?
Instal a picnic table, a building site?
No, this is where the angel will alight.
Just let it be, let be, until
the avatar is due.

