

Michael Coady

**OVEN LANE**  
AND OTHER POEMS



Gallery Books

*Oven Lane and Other Poems*,  
a revised, enlarged edition  
of *Oven Lane* (1987),  
is first published  
on 27 March 2014.

The Gallery Press  
Loughcrew  
Oldcastle  
County Meath  
Ireland

[www.gallerypress.com](http://www.gallerypress.com)

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ISBN 978 1 85235 595 1

A CIP catalogue record for this book  
is available from the British Library.



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## *The Bayonet*

Unholy relic of the bleeding mud,  
the Somme was where you cut your teeth, I'm told;  
my father's uncle brought you back when he  
was pensioned off with shellshock and with scroll.

We used you as a poker and an axe —  
for years you were entrenched on our hearthstone,  
you stabbed the coal to red, split timber clean  
as if the makers meant you for such chores.

I wonder if your heart was ever tempered  
in living flesh, wetwarm about your steel?  
Your function was the plunge to crimson climax  
of killed and killer coupled, scream on scream.

I know you soldiered through domestic wars  
in all the years you lay on our hearthstone;  
you learned how close allied are love and hurt  
and bonded most when closest to the bone.

The dark stains that you bear may be of blood —  
when I was young we used to think it so —  
but veteran years of cut and thrust and flame  
have breached your battle-edge, disarmed your core.

## *The Jackdaws of Chapel Street*

The jackdaws of Chapel Street  
don't care much either way  
for weddings, births or funerals  
or what the people say.

They perch on roofs and chimney stacks  
and watch processions pass,  
the drunken and the dead man,  
the crowd from Sunday Mass.

They cast a grey and empty eye  
upon the play below,  
they nest and feed and squabble  
while generations go.

The grieving man behind the hearse  
looks up to see them pairing  
above the cold stone statues  
that wind and rain are wearing.

The jackdaws of Chapel Street  
don't care much for the people,  
they defecate on tombstones  
and copulate on steeples.

## *The Shapeliest Distance Between Two Points*

Let us have curves and no straight lines,  
nature abhors the ruler and set square —  
full buttocks, breast and thigh  
are shapes that satisfy.

See the egg, the bend of river,  
wing of bird, wave on strand,  
cellos are bellied to bring to our ears  
transcendent mysteries.

## *Christmas Eve at The White Hart*

*A Pheadair a aspail*  
*a' bhfaca tú mo ghrá gheal?*  
*Och agus ochón ó.*

Man from Connemara  
singing of Christ's passion,  
mother's pain,  
to shouts for mild  
and bitter.

Bitter  
the Christmas Eve  
Kinsale was lost.  
*Och agus ochón ó.*

Christ's passion,  
mother's pain,  
rock, air, sea  
of Connemara  
fusing in  
a labourer's song

at The White Hart,  
Highbury.  
*Och agus ochón ó.*