

Pouring its turgid sperm into the Shannon.
 Ah 'tis, he says, Ah yes, a true bloody fact,
 And turns to talk about the Charolais and the Whitehead Herefords
 With Jerry McDermot up the bar.
 No JJ, listen to me, I tell him, Look again, look here:
 This is the manhood of Ireland plunging
 Into that great slut of an ocean.
 'Tis that, he says, Yes indeed, I see it there,
 And calls for another pint from Clare Egan for each of us
 And helps himself to a Woodbine out of Jerry's pack.
 Mary Carey comes over,
 Dangling a half-glass between two fingers.
 And what was this you were mentioning over here JJ, she says.
 Mary Mary, let me explain, I say,
 We were discussing the virtue of the Whitehead cattle
 As compared to the Charolais . . .
 Which are a dead loss, says Jerry McDermot.
 Oh I see, she says, Oh yes.
 Nothing of the kind, Clare tells her,
 The infamous Yank is lying to you, Mary:
 He and JJ were examining the River Shannon on this map
 And how it pours itself into the ocean
 In an act of fornication.
 Ah go on, says Mary Carey.
 A dead loss, says Jerry McDermot.

LITANY AGAINST THE BELLYACHE, UPON ST. BRIGID'S DAY

Then it was the fierce place in my middle
 where the crazed flatus was
 & with it a prayer to holy Mother Brigid
 that she might heal me from her nunnery in the sky
 because I suffered nightsweats & burnings at stool
 because it was the tea-colored diarrhea
 because I was in pain
 because there was neither joy in my supper nor bliss in my bedding

because it was Venice all night in my mind
because we two sat watching the vaporetti
because she had hastened to join me after my drunken entreaties
because the vaporetti came back & forth
because none of this was true
because there had been neither entreaty nor hastening
I was too much alone
I was in pain because of my flatus
I was lying awake in the midnight over too much flatus
I spent my last prayer like a hasty letter home
I brought her down to me in a glint of ice-light
where the dour crows perched in the branches
where their broken cries came raggedly down from above
where the Saint looked over the windowsills of joy
where she had come to me anyway true or untrue
where I had told her over again the same brave lunacies
where the blight in my belly sang "Stranger in Paradise"
instead of *Benedictus*
instead of any Sunday by the Grand Canal
nor any vaporetti
but the Rue Saint André-des-Arts in Montparnasse
or the alleys of Iraklion black with crones
or the gray isles west of Inishmore
where never womenfolk ever were nor any thought of them