

## WILLOW

A day like this I feel like telling my neighbor  
how supercelestial the look of his willow is

as seen through my front-room window. It's partly  
his willow, partly my window, which has curved panes

so there's a goldfish-bowl effect, & also  
the splattering of new-green grass, which is

golden of course, this being early Spring  
the year of Bach's 300th birthday. I am

listening instead to Mozart's "Paris" Symphony  
K. 297, the one he wrote while Mother was dying,

none of which seems even vaguely important. I live  
a completely ramshackle life in the vegetable

mid-land. Children beleaguer us. Babies awaken us.  
Mother & I go to bed around 3 in the afternoon

to partake of some hasty carnal refreshment  
while one of the boys is over at the Park fishing

& his brothers lie abed amid stench & toys.  
Later I put on the seraphic C-Minor Symphony

for Organ & Orchestra by Saint-Saëns, which the jacket says  
is the most glorious evocation of the gusto of God

anywhere this side of Bach, maybe bigger than Bach,  
whose organ Saint-Saëns' recalls. Later still I have plans

to begin composing my memoir about my Cambridge days  
then treat myself to ice-cream the way Mozart did

at the Palais Royale the night he gave them  
that last allegro, marking his ascent into manhood.

The reason I call this poem "Willow"  
has to do with my neighbor's tree in his frontyard

though not entirely. This man is one  
who brought only daughters into the world.

When he walks up the street, as infrequently he does,  
I note that listing walk of his and consider

how he has walked that way all of his life  
& bequeathed his walk to his daughters, charming

ungainly girls who will both of them one day & possibly  
for numberless days in a row & as many afternoons

send their husbands into musical hallucinations  
the way that willow does, the way the memory

of rose light fluttering above billows of Bach  
in King's College Chapel has power to do—

the way her skin invariably will  
when I have placed my face above her Islands of Langerhans

& her belly is covered with sweat like a melon  
fresh from the fruit-drawer and the company of endive.

### THE MANHOOD OF IRELAND

One afternoon at Egan's in Kilkee  
I show JJ my map of Shannon Estuary.  
Look JJ, I tell him, look at this map:  
Here's the River Fergus like a great vas deferens