

S I N E A D M O R R I S S E Y

*Nettles*

Where you have asked me to follow you is, I imagine,  
Dark, open to the point of invisibility, and brushed by the invasion  
Of our honeymoon three years back. You are closing my eyes  
With your mouth and your mouth is a warm pool to rest in.

But instead of the night of the beach fire at Bethell's  
With its after-dinner moon, dune grasses, sand-flies,  
Cast voices of fishermen, the sense of electrified wonder if we were  
ever  
To lose the other, looms a forest of conquering nettles—

Head-high, wavering, viscose, sodden,  
Strangling the loganberries, twinning themselves to raspberries,  
Growing over the bathtub and the bathtub's rainwater—  
Imprinted on my retina from the day's attempted harvest in the  
garden.

# Clocks

The sadness of their house is hard to defeat. There are at least three  
clocks per room.  
There are two people with nothing to do but to be in each room and be  
separate.  
The person each room was decorated by was seconded to a plot in a  
cemetery  
that is walked to every day and tended like a bedroom sanctuary. No  
notice given.  
The clocks do all the talking. He visits the grave in the middle of a three-  
hour loop  
and knows the year of completion of every castle in Ireland.  
His route is always the same: the round tower via the aqueduct via the  
cemetery  
via the ramparts via the Battle of Antrim during the Rising of the United  
Irishmen  
in 1798, the slaughter of which is more present  
if he's deep in the morning of his April wedding breakfast, or locked into  
the moment they fitted  
the oxygen mask and she rolled her bruised eyes back.  
She is unable to find the stop for the bus to Belfast and stays indoors.  
The nets turn the daylight white and empty.  
She has worn the married life of her sister so tightly  
over her own, the noise of the clocks makes her feel almost without skin.  
Sometimes she sits in her sister's chair and feels guilty.  
She has *Countdown* for company and a selective memory:  
the argument at the funeral with her niece over jewellery  
and years ago the conspiracy to keep her single, its success.  
Time settles over each afternoon like an enormous wing, when the flurry  
of lunch-time has left them and the plates have already been set for tea.  
He reads extensively, from *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives*, to *Why Ireland  
Starved*,  
but has taken to giving books away lately to anyone who calls.  
Winter or summer, evenings and early: they retire to their separate rooms  
at least  
two hours before sleep. It falls like an act of mercy  
when the twenty-two clocks chime eight o'clock in almost perfect unison.