

THREE POEMS



Tom French

MICHAEL LONGLEY
(after Michael Longley)

Michael Longley, I think of you
Rousing yourself to write each morning,
Throwing on old clothes like vestments
For the rites of writing. Yours is seldom not
The clear advancement of a heavyweight prize-
Fighter walking a heavily puerperal Chihuahua

On a gale-force blasted promontory in March,
Tethered to each other by lengths of angel-thread.
Like pedigree pups your poems are on their way.
You stand there reading while the wind permits—
While you grow wiser they have reached the breach,
Ingenious as parentage, ingenious as pure-blooded pups.

NOT ONE SMALL DROP OF GOD'S GOOD RAIN

Lover, in rain, I have to say
This raincoat I am gifting you will be as useful
as a chocolate teapot place on a range,
or a shot in the arm with a rubber syringe.

But the best that can be said for it is that,
indoors and preferably in bed,
if you zip it up and then pull up the hood
and fasten all the shiny clasps and fasteners
so that it looks as if a tiny shiny San Francisco Chief
with great flanged wheels were running between
your navel and the dinky little dimple in your chin,

so that it makes your pink nipples stand up and out
on either side, like two tourist attractions
to be pointed out by tour guides, to the left and right

of your chest, to all the passengers who have paid
good money for the full tour of you,

I can almost personally, whole-heartedly, and not
unconditionally guarantee,
that not one small drop of God's good rain
would dare to shed its own small store of wet
on your good head in this long, hot, West-of-Ireland,
middle-of-a-dry-spell, August night.

ASPERGER CHILD

*Our God is coming and will not keep silence:
consuming fire runs before him
and wreathes him closely round.* PSALM 50:3

When he sits staring in at the flames in the range
My brother must see what the cat can see
Because he sits there staring in at them like her,

For all the world like an old tom,
His huge back hunched and turned to the television.
There seems to be some kind of plot in the fire box
The two of them have been following all winter.

When the fresh wood cracks and spits out sap
He sits on the hands he'd abandoned in his lap
To stop them from zooming off above his head.

And like the cat we never named that pounced
From a shelf last year one day onto the range, and
Spent three week clopping around the house

With Sudocream pots attached to her two front paws,
Making my enormous brother helpless with laughter,
He seems to know that this dangerous orange flower

We stuff with blocks and sacks of turf can hurt
Because it wants to make all things as orange as itself.
But he leans above the range and risks the burn

Because the other thing my brother seems to know
Is that his not being able to see it will hurt him more.