

Landscape with Teeth

Cattle dusk-sculpted on a plinth of skyline.
Breast of a chaffinch a watered strawberry.
Inishturk a whale-shape on the glazed sea

Bog, clod, soggy, sod, plod. Nimbus
of light over boggy pasture; couchgrass
in flattened mats; blunt push of mushrooms

through loamy hush. Nests, passage graves,
crosses. Steam-clouds out of the cows'
rosy mouths. Soft furnaces of their body-bulk.

Three girls moving through a rainmist
under a huge blue umbrella, waiting for Monet
to paint them as they are on the headland:

grey swell of sea, horizon a pale lapis, sky
chequered with cloud, a pointillist silvering
shiver of rain. Their poppy-coloured laugh.

Indoors, a window ledge of books, that umber
Italian vase of meadowsweet and loosestrife,
a spray of fuchsia against the verdigris

and plumblue bulges of Tully Mountain.
In the foreground one rusted sickle, a single
blip of sunlight setting fire to the tip.

But where do the real dreams come from
in their primary colours, with their small teeth
sharpened and their warm wet tongue?

Ghost Ship

after Dorothy Cross

Three nights running I have been to see it,
anchored in the winter harbour, waiting,
disappearing into the dark and reappearing.

Tonight I want to be ferried out to it,
to press my palms against its water lines
and touch its sides before I go aboard.

I want to go below to the immaculate galley
to undo the catches on its pristine cupboards,
and slip into the private sleeping quarters

to touch the tucked neat berths of the dead,
their metal lockers filled with personal effects,
their snapshots of the living, our locks of hair,

and be rowed back home before first light
with nothing to show for the night at sea
or a word to say for myself, except the feel of it

persisting beneath me, and the tips of my fingers
glowing in the darkness when I hold them up,
where I touched it, where it won't wash off.