Soul Food

MENU OF POEMS 2016

People often turn to poetry at times of illness, loss or recovery, even people who have little time for it in their day-to-day lives. Poetry seems to help, by filling our minds with unexpected images, by inviting us into a reflective space where words can offer some spiritual sustenance. Poetry – I'll even dare to say – can reach the parts that food cannot! We offer this menu of poems to you, on Poetry Day Ireland, for nourishment of another sort. We hope you enjoy them.

COLETTE BRYCE, EDITOR

Theory Of Memory

LOUISE GLÜCK

Long, long ago, before I was a tormented artist, afflicted with longing yet incapable of forming durable attachments, long before this, I was a glorious ruler uniting all of a divided country — so I was told by the fortune-teller who examined my palm. Great things, she said, are ahead of you, or perhaps behind you; it is difficult to be sure. And yet, she added, what is the difference? Right now you are a child holding hands with a fortune-teller. All the rest is hypothesis and dream.

From *Faithful and Virtuous Night*, Carcanet, 2014

"Hope" is the thing with feathers

EMILY DICKINSON

"Hope" is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chillest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet, never, in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of Me.

From *The Poems Of Emily Dickinson*,
The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press,
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From the Irish

IAN DUHIG

According to Dineen, a Gael unsurpassed
in lexicographical enterprise, the Irish
for moon means 'the white circle in a slice
of half-boiled potato or turnip'. A star
is the mark on the forehead of a beast
and the sun is the bottom of a lake, or well.

Well, if I say to you your face
is like a slice of half-boiled turnip,
your hair is the colour of a lake's bottom
and at the centre of each of your eyes
is the mark of the beast, it is because
I want to love you properly, according to Dineen.

'From the Irish' by kind permission of the author

Lying in Wait for Happiness

YEHUDA AMICHAI

Translated by Glenda Abramson & Tudor Parfitt

On the broad steps leading down to the Western Wall
A beautiful woman came up to me: You don't remember me,
I'm Shoshana in Hebrew. Something else in other languages.
All is vanity.

Thus she spoke at twilight standing between the destroyed
And the built, between the light and the dark.
Black birds and white birds changed places
With the great rhythm of breathing.
The flash of tourists' cameras lit my memory too:
What are you doing here between the promised and the forgotten,
Between the hoped for and the imagined?
What are you doing here lying in wait for happiness
With your lovely face a tourist advertisement from God
And your soul rent and torn like mine?

She answered me: My soul is rent and torn like yours
But it is beautiful because of that
Like fine lace.

From *Poems of Jerusalem and Love Poems*,
The Sheep Meadow Press, 1981

In celebration of Poetry Day 2016, *Soul Food* is intended for distribution throughout hospitals and healthcare settings in Ireland. The poetry is a selection from the Poems for Patience series in Galway University Hospitals and edited by Colette Bryce.

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To download a copy go to: www.artsandhealth.ie
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