

wading
for
stillness

E.S. Durkan

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Author's Statement

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The following selections of verse, yet unpublished, reveal a brief glimpse of the varied poetic stylings, themes and rhetoric explored throughout Eamon Durkan's wider work of verse and lyric prose.

By employing crisp images, strung together in confluence, the author aspires to offer readers a resting place, a chance to lay down the weight of thought and sink into the warm, marine layers of the mind – a world unbent by intellect, yet not unintellectual.

To that end the young author hopes these poems, bits of verse, may serve as an aide – perhaps even a comfort – a way to access the uncluttered mind, which bears witness to and reads these lines, spoken into life as verse.

Poems Included in this Selection

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I.

1. the sea-trunk's humming edge
2. (don't) pull against the barbs
3. love letter to myself
4. it was a Saturday in outer space (when they sold the globe)

II.

5. across the borderline to Maine
6. the builder of Mayo
7. when you reach
8. brief
9. untitled after retreat

III.

10. near Wellington, NZ
11. uncle mícheál in the kitchen (with van morrison)
12. inscription from my own heart
13. the muse and the sea, revisited
14. the white bird in the marsh
15. you will not believe me; you will see

I.

the sea-trunk's humming edge

haul yourself have been its sun-pale vast-edged	up on searching, at porous flesh, silent sponge	the question, you its salt-worn side like some
you've been and you've its saline lilt	treading water grown heavy in your glazed stare	far too long, with salt I can see through the ocean's
tepid dark, the dock-ish your	you tread the clock of water's sorrow-cheek	lapping-question's side, spray upon
Hoist! I say! the floating with its salt, under the violet-indigo, sleeves hang the sea-trunk's Milky Way's the captive that from lithe breast	Haul yourself upon sun-bleached lay the wide-less arch falling ink-spill dark their pooling humming edge, scattered buzz-of-haze; pushing from is what must rest the mere-act-of-life	the curved board, trunk grown buoyant whole rank night of sky; maroon- let your saline drops over let them gather in the the captured breath, your chest like any infant, tired upon the mother-animal's
All night, stay below that you a refuge'd heave upon somewhere entangled mute is prying itself from eternity	there with clamming beside, now must lay defeated, straggler, buoyant the question's girth below the the far off	hiss of salt, now is the time a bedraggled stranger, only as your tired ribs the sun is coming black-and-violet-quiet of cunning-edge of dawn
but hush, and wait		

16 October 2019
Number of lines: 33

(don't) pull against the barbs

“don't pull
against the barbs,”
he said

he was skinning
the fish by then
its scales, almost purple,
like shingles
stripped off in a storm

he was quiet then,
and the skiff rocked lightly
in the breeze:
the sky turned,
and a thin rain
gauzed down
sallow (like something leaving this world)

I looked at him there,
hunched in his woolen overalls

“...and if I do?” I said

his face turned to me,
looked at me,

“...*don't.*”
he said
“*pull against the barbs.*”

love letter to myself
(from my own heart)

It is summer now. And you are sitting in my landlady's treehouse.

Composing.

A letter, a love letter, to yourself. It reads,

“This is a difficult time, my dear. You are navigating it extraordinarily well. You are urging and inclining — softening and opening, exposing the many spots of tenderness in this heart-and-mind.

Keep going. Keep going in, my dear. You may not believe me (and indeed don't have to) you may fixate on the vast uncertainties of the world closed by fear, though rightly so...keep going.

Things grow to recognize themselves with time if held with loving-warmth, with warm-heartedness — trust in the process, which unfurls at its own trackless pace.

First roots understand that they must descend, must pierce the heavy clay-soil — for a whole year, sometimes — before they sprout a single ridged or beveled leaf. Keep going. Consider the cultivation of the knowing, the perceiving heart, as primary (it is).

And most of all, undo yourself in Nature. Be pleased. Be uncoiled. Allow your desperate “need” for certainty, as best you can, to rest under the forest soil awhile...

Begin again. The heart-of-warmth has never left. Pick it up. Warm it with your breath. Begin anew, afresh.

And most of all, as I said, undo yourself...with warmth.”

Keep going.

it was a Saturday in outer space
(when they sold the Globe)

it was a Saturday
in outer space and somebody
had just sold the Globe.

they were counting,
on long fingers,
the spheres with lips of discontent
“not enough” they said
“yes”
“the pale and the dark”
“yes”
“the pearly and the rough”
“...yes”
“not enough”
they said, counting each,
as on a Chinese abacus
“that one”
they said a flare, a blaze
a blade, a corona
burnishing in a strange eye
“*that one, there... in the middle?*”
the smile shook out, complete
and sneering,
“Yes.”

it was a Saturday in outer space
when they sold the Globe.

II.

across the borderline to Maine
 (a poem for Mother's Day)

Somewhere in the dark swerves
 of memory there is a scene.

Come, tell me, do you recall?

It is 3am, or 4.
 Dark. Early. August and
 we are piling into the white
 breadbox, the asphalt is cold, underfoot
 the 15-passenger van, all cleared out.
 is filled with blankets and sleeping bags
 of every sort and soon
 like diligent (though sleepy) ducklings,
 we are all filed in.

the dimpled plastic light bares down
 like houselights glowing on a foggy shore...

you count our heads and sigh.
 we are all there.
 so, we set off, tumbling through the silt of night

when someone's voice begins to read,
 it is you you, the mother
 la mère, la mer
 the soft-voiced one,
 and soon we're tumbling through thought
 holding fast to your articulated words
 the cogs of our imaginings
 whirl and aspire into imagery

distances emerge,
 the wheels of thought turn you,
 you are powering them, somehow
 (unbeknownst to us)
 like water to the waterwheel
 held and cupped

and sleep covers us over,
a luxury, as the boxy vehicle juts through night
and the hours loosen in our sleepy eyes...

until, sometime later,
we wake to the lost strand
of your voice
“*We’ve crossed the borderline,*” you say
“...*we are — in Maine.*”

9 May 2021,
Number of Lines: 39

**the builder of Mayo
a poem for Father's Day**

There is a builder, somewhere
in the past,
setting posts (and placing stones)
in *Castelroyan Co. Mayo*
his face flickers, changes
in the grey dawn, the chimney
rock stones cut square.

He builds; he builds
freely, like you, imagining
the swift bite of the wind,
and time he places
and inspects, his hands change,
he gauges and guesses
and graces (this earth)
his mind soars look, look!
into the still pocket of the
pond, tell me
do you see
his keen eyes, peering
(thoughtfully) back at you?

20 June, 2021
Number of Lines: 22

when you reach

reach

out of love, the way
redwoods do
(with their spindle bowers)

...reach out

and
love the way
redwoods might

asking
just one thing

to be,

a little closer,
to the light

31 July, 2020
Number of Lines: 13

brief

And we strode
 out together, handprint
 fit in handprint, as though
 it had never been another way

As though the tick of ephemeral
 time existed, not at all
 perhaps (in fact)
 it did not; those
 sweet, clear moments walking out
 the mud-tired path, under
 a clear'd island sky, climbing
 the five-bar cattle gate, chatting
 of heritage, as though nothing,
 not a single brushstroke
 had ever been placed differently

how many eternities passed
 under the press
 of her hazel-eye, it is
 impossible for anyone, far less myself,
 to wager or to know... supposedly, it all
 came heaving through
 the tiny boxes
 of hours

but it cannot be.

 It is impossible.
 Even lifetimes
 may have burst
 their dove-tailed corners, bent
 by all that was
 traversed and transferred
 in that brief, eternal
 clock-less
 shift-of time

untitled after retreat

What use
is a hook
without its barbs?

so long, so long
the barbed thoughts
reigned

now, they are dissolved
like stiches from
the sinews
of an arrow-wound

dissolved, I say, no more
can hook
their teeth

into the
tissue of the heart

not banished,
but burnished

polished, freed
'til seen no more

27 December 2021

III.

near Wellington, NZ

It was
a long embrace

and slipped between
his English wit, a parting sadness hid

his son, my friend,
long held in his grasp

*but it was always
like that*

“his dad gets sad
whenever Izzy leaves,”

Lilly turned to me
and said,

the two, close-veined, still pressed
like leaves between pages, fresh

when at last they broke away
I heard his words from earlier, to me

“nice getting to know you,”

then, “and if I don’t see you again that would be sad,
have a lovely life

and don’t you
go changing!”

We pulled away as
sun filtered through the juniper,

a velvet-pink rose, plucked and stuck
in the dashboard vent

and those two,
John and Maria,

waving from the gravel drive

playfully making
bunnies' ears

as if to suggest the moment,
photographic

pinned in time

21 November 2018

uncle mícheál in the kitchen
(with van morrison)

*“let-go-in-to
the-mys-ter-y!”*

he would sing
in the kitchen
in the Rath.
“Kilmore, Kilcock”
(which I would
write as a return address
when I took the City Bike
through Dublin)

“let-your-self go!”
he sang
shuffling in the space
beside the kitchen table,
the slate courtyard
outside the window
dark drenched with wetness
from the rains last night,
the textured-pebble whitewash,
which I’d come to love
(now out of sight)

and the freshness
thick, innocuous,
brought in
(on wellies)

from the paddock
and the pasture-field

inscription from my own heart
(for my own heart)

When you finally
rest
and extract the “*is*”
from *resist*

You will let me know,
won't you?

3 May 2020
Number of lines: 6

...the muse and the sea,
revisited

when down the sandy
bluff, we climbed

near that port-town
“*something* by the sea”

the sun, a painted apricot,
as dusk *coved* in

and the string’d musings
from the mandolin

touched the clapping surf,
the ringing salt that wrapped

white barnacle, all
drenched and latched

within, a cavernous
black canticle of silence

did they sing
amongst themselves, among

their mute melodies,
the musings of the mandolin...

it’s then the muse, with her
magenta scarf appears

and waving, *riotous*
uproaringly, she flings the tide

and trods the surf and arches
as she sinks her knees

it’s then
she sparks and flowers

and bending by the surf,
she laughs

*...as beautiful, as she
is free*

28 September, 2021
Number of Lines: 30

**the white bird
in the marsh**

she had
disarmed herself
with flowers

the slender blaze
of lilies, the
quiet caps of cherry

all
fell from her
as she bristled, swung
her yellow eyes
across the River Albion

unalarmed, she raised
herself casting her
slate-shadow over

our tiny
scudding vessel

against the ebb, the end
of eventide (oh, how
you bore it all! you

beautiful, desperate creature)

the white bird
in the marsh

**you will not believe me;
you will see**

“you will not
believe me; you will see”

you stare

*(you will
not believe me;
you will see?)*

*you will not believe
me; you
will see—)*

“separate yourself
and you will fall; separate”

*she spoke with her eyes
eyes eyes*

“followed forever; forever followed!”

*she hallowed through her soles,
the sanguine of cracked teeth*

“you will not believe me, no” *sighed in the alley*

“you will see!” *turned, alight toward the odd sky*

“extend yourself,” *extemporaneous, precipitous
ascent, she used to be a dancer*

“uncowed, rise!” *she said, then, “no! no! you
will not believe me...you will see.”*

“I will take you there.” *her eyes “Agh! I will not
take you there. I will; you will
see”*

her eyes, a cipher; sable, cut through the center

“imitate nothing.” *the threads, themselves, threadbare*

“cease, cease, cease!” *she cried mocking the harbor gulls—*

*sobb’d, nodding, head-in-hands— rose
sudden on limber calves*

“it is hopelessly alive, this”

*motioned, motioned
blinked in the grey*

“but, you will not believe me; you
will see

fa, fa!”

*flung something invisible
into the horizon*

“I will take you there.
You *will* see.”

24 July 2022
Number of lines: 40