

Guth & Voice le Mícheál Ó Ruairc

Guth

Bhí a aghaidh dearmadta aici, adúirt
an tseanbhean i dtaobh duine dá comharsana,
a thréithe, a phearsantacht, go fiú cér díobh é
imithe isteach in umar na díchuimhne.

Ba chuimhin léi a ghuth, áfach,
a chuid Gaolainne ghlé-ghlan, bhinn
fós ag clingeadh ina cluasa
tar éis breis agus trí scór bliain.

Samhlacha fuaimne a bhí fágtha de,
fuipeanna ag lascadh ceithre cúinní
a haighe le linn a hóige, é ag saighdeadh
an ghadhair i mbun oibre i bhfad uaithi

thuas ar thaobh an chnoic maidin earraigh;
fras d'fhocail fhuara throma sneachta
ag titim go torannach ar d'fon since
a hinchinne, gach abairt bainte

as cairéal teann teanga, gach siolla fuinte
fáiscithe amhail seoda rionnaithe ag lonradh;
blosc-mhaidhm toirní ag tormáil go toll
i spéir an iarthair maidin Bhealtaine.

'Croí cine teanga' an nath dá chuid a thug sí
mar shéad fine anonn go Meiriceá léi ar dtúis,
choinnigh i dtaisce ina hintinn ó shin
agus coinneodh go huair a báis.

Voice

She had forgotten his face, the old woman
admitted with regard to one of her neighbours,
his traits, his personality and even his entire
bloodline had been consigned to oblivion.

She remembered his voice, however,
the crystal-clear, melodic Gaelic intonations
still ringing in her ears
after more than sixty years.

Sound images were all that remained of him,
a linguistic whip lashing the four corners
of her consciousness during her youth,
setting the dog away in the distance

up on the hillside on a spring morning;
a sudden shower of cold, heavy wordstones
falling noisily on the zinc roof
of her brain, every single sentence hewn

from a taut, tonal language quarry, every
syllable cloven like cut jewels glistening;
a sudden clap of thunder rumbling
in the western sky on a May morning.

‘Croí cine teanga’, the idiom of his she took
as an heirloom over to America in the distant past,
kept it stored in her mind ever since
and would until she breathed her last.

Note: ‘croí cine teanga’ – ‘the heart of a race is its language’