Poetry Series

Kevin Kiely
- poems -

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Selected Publications:
The Welkinn Complex Number One Son, Florida, FL, 2011.
Plays produced by RTÉ include Children of No Importance and Multiple Indiscretions. Theatre productions include In This Supreme Hour at the Playhouse, Derry.

kevinkielypoet wiki
A Map Of Melancholy

To P.M.B.

1
The cut aches beneath eyelids of sky a glimpse of cherry red
dusk light distorted through water in a glass, trees are sickly yellow
in winter's killing ice, only the season of Zanna?symphony of trees swirl
coiling uncoiling her hair, shoes nickel into silver along Rue Tillich
in the purlieus of Rosenzwieg Strasse within walking distance of fountains
spray can graffiti, slick kitsch colour: tone koan but there is no continuing
city, not only people but things get broken, elevators from the underworld
to the bright vaulted halls where you clamber with others noisily, wearily
while she stops in the conspiracy of streets mends a broken fingernail
with a tiny brush and polish, twinned with each tree she passes
through the park blonde hair subsumed in pink blossom, blown
like strawberry cotton candy, her laugh at playful songs of love because
for her it opens in the spectacle of a thousand starlings flying
and her rowan berry lips open to smile in a sunbeam focus
for to touch her heart is to feel life flowing as the fiery arrow
of sunrise above a sleepless ocean of milk and is by the action
of her hands suspended raised towards you and the trees move in turn
moving sunlight and the seashell teeth that change into pearls
while her voice ends the sonic of suffering where the extremity
of feeling pours out flooding the senses and dreadlocked anxiety
opens into what life, what bliss. The photograph at the Causeway
of her diastemic smile against the breaking surf on rocks where
metaphysics lose out to the sensual and she owns the heaving
ocean and the jagged bedrock grotto that enshrines her cult, so you
cannot think within this liquor of confusion yielding to laughter
and what is her smile, she will not answer every persistent
question directly, she wants it now and you better know what it
is, the information is given in smiles, read them carefully and
most of all life tells you what you see is perfect but as soon as you
reveal this she will shrug ruefully in the ultimate sport and would
you ever want it to end. In solitude such is theophany and solitude
is stronger than songs about it, deeper than contemplation
but who would neglect her for solitude.

2
I know that to reject most of what we are told will seem elitist
but when she talks there is more than plenitude beyond nature’s bounty
I don’t believe anymore in soundbite it is abused, I don’t accept your rejections
of the sacred that I have tasted in her eyes and her voice which you fake
in your many presentations. Go ahead manufacture your news & things but I may
spit on most of them because we are fleeting, you shall not lead me next
door to doom you shall not make me fear what you honour.
I know our limbs are the cage and this song is free and felt from inside
outside your strictures: this song is given forever by her to me, so world
I say to you: go on your way without her or with her for she will be known,
the one untorn seam and though you don’t believe me, the untorn mind
your world is your own in everything you sign but it is less than schedules
or crumpled cups, you will never destroy my darling: you will never
break me again in this life and her eyes shine at night beyond car lined
avenues of despair, call this fanciful but it is true and holy as the truth
that we are all one among the melancholy world of tears and woe
our joy resounds in longing chains of loneliness and her shadow
in pain shows the world transfigured beyond gloom.

3
She is alive more than time’s apparent movement taking me with her
more than time ever shall; life is not life as when travellers exhale and ask
how much time have we got? I don’t ask. I don’t ask anything because she
is in the Holograph and the Melancholograph, resplendent archive
where time is a dimension an abandoned vista of cities on a sea
bound by elliptical landmass linked to wider seas, therefore watchers
from deep spaces have pity on us when the night is long and laden
with luminous laptop windows and real pain below the forgotten vivid sky
loom and does not regulate, for even the zillions of stars on threads
smoulder into powder and she shall not, she shall not leave me alone
for dear life is not tawdry and living is not a feather plucked for extinction
nor pain itself longing in purification of the blood in its own seascape towards
vision which renders the pigeons flying from the seawall a visual quotation and
the herons on the deepest rocks looking out to sea some salt encrusted mural
on a medieval ship for if you had found the lost map with her the geography
beyond the maelstrom and with widening gaze accepted in formidable strength
that we are weak, we are dying, we are cinders already clinker less in sound than
castanets and when she turns to gaze into your eyes urgent as the time of night
in the airport throng where lone purpose and intent, smoke-rooms foggy
with swirling glass and the ouroborus invisible visible, orchestral melancholy
trains speeding full entering the M-tunnel, the hem of the sea is not beautiful
then, neither lace nor silk desert dirt sand, threadbare grass oasis littered rivers in flood, the furrowed oceans of silent fish who stare aimless through their ceiling at the sun.

4

Nature hides mysteries in water and in the oceans that potentially reveal the spectacle, insubstantial to the spectator publicly watching in disbelief as mercurial moods calm crazy hollow displace and obliterate steadier modes of thought grimy blades of grass framed in ice and sculpted ice demigods tight shoes bearing their feet poised on the steel ridged steps still targets, time-beings, ghosts, limp hands on rubber handrails not always elliptical, moving these creatures after such a night, in clothes from stage screen and store to the percussion of turnstile check-out, adagio of talk, the partial resolve of the known transaction coffee bakery aroma of kiosks, luggage on wheels, life’s hectic spiel, serious gloomy sorry faces mocked by weeds and vinegar rain. There is only one journey and it is to her smile, to the angel threaded strands of her hair in the sun to a cup she graced with her mouth and tongue, to a grove of cherry trees she planted for peace, to her house on a hill above a divided city where she looked on killing, and her eyes and actions kept a glow beneath the darkness. No?no?no? no?no, I tell you I have been within her sacred grove and we shall not be burned like the combustibles when the grey smoke of bitumen throbs among the vertebrae of flames and the stench is hell, for to be touched by her is healing and in an instant all pain, all death, all longing disappears and in her eyes and voice is the resolution of the quest while in her kiss a true home emerges for this earth that baffles astounds, repels and yet astonishes in its chant, fix your eyes on her gaze and this is easily done, ask nothing of her as the tar barrels burn and the city is shaken in quakes as if time stops the ripples of blood that form in pools it is not blood it is wine from the vat, no more no more, every blown leaf and flower calls you out to her: all is resolved we have not been created for horror solely and the cause only known in part so let the complete resolution in your eyes merge with her rippling smile within without while nature shines and we will know, let me repeat we will know before we die: it is told in the pools of her eyes into which I move down behind a waterfall to a volcanic marble entrance that opens where starlings beat warmth and music from their wings, the goat chews grass for its green wine cherry trees cast their fruit into baskets, the stage set house where she comes
to the window wild, wide-eyed, beckoning and my name on her open lips.

Note: (i) An early draft of John Keats’s ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ begins: “The cut aches...”

Kevin Kiely
Art's Festival

Across at the pub some local Michaelangelo
Has muralised you in a suit on cloud nine
A sort of Sligo in Heaven
Executed with naive lumps of paint

The journalist, the peacock scholar, the piss artist
Made their carnival on high stools
About your moved bones in happy Drumcliffe
Willie, the most holy last lovely Romantic
The skipper at home his spirit soaring

Indeed I felt no need to curse your bones
Near the upturned huge boat of Bulben
Or your epitaph from Shakespeare's Timon
Festive ghost—cast a cold eye on poetry

Kevin Kiely
Belfield Metaphysical

The sky is a mere exhibition in pools of rain until the sun unfolds the froth of clouds casting off cosmic oceans of light and without horizon limitless, where there is silence

No sense and white grains sifting infinitesimally tiny winds of light, fine salt of light that does not blind the eyes because seeing is seeing more than ever in distance

If not forever, endless in dimensions beyond comprehension there is no heat or sound. Silence: the obverse of the world. Where is this zone? The return, with tactile contact at the railings

The overpass balcony: noise of cars and trucks below—a wet ash twig studded with black seeds, ivory bark in ordinary sunlight: leaf-bows, lettuce green, edible in beauty

The unread gashes on the bark, this key-twig to re-open saturday pulp crumbs blow along the beaches of the world forming in books and dissolving in dust and into books again

So much missing prosaic terza rima sentinel of the shelves there is not a bright grain on the photocopy, metaphors will fit not fit, lame language, scratches of pen on train tickets, words on the dull

White page desktop from pressed keys: through a portal of silver fleece the aircraft banks to climb stairs of clouds, levels off—the horizon’s walls are lit with streams of leaking light

The jolt that suggests speed beyond dials. The ache of longing: take me away finally from all this, take me home from each day’s lost and found, the sulphur of solitude

The wealth of her mirrored who heals the naked chaos. Anyone will tell you there is the trouble with Medusa, and Medea’s hatred is not exceptional. The quest for Moneta is a path through fear between the flint of conflict and the night of eureka. Behind the hours is essential cold the candle looks back to centuries, the flame makes the room a cave
These books speak scenes of innocent love with new dialogue in dreams

Kevin Kiely
Breakfast With Sylvia Plath

1.
in Café Insomnia, anaemic sunlight
traffic outside
the rain flecked picture window
sizzling bacon, eggs wide eyed
frying on the gas

the face by turns, almond pale and fire bright
a streak of lip paint on the brilliant teeth
she eyes the menu in a seething force-nine rage
her conversation post modern in its tangled sense

...bad dreams about a hare
run over by a Morris estate wagon
driven by Edward Hughes
his Meinkampf look (his cock runneth over)
the car with a split screen
two steering wheels, one for her father, Otto
who skinned a rat in front of his students
cooked, and ate it

I won't mention that awful weevil of a woman
I will never speak to God again

Edward Hughes should have
scratched on my tombstone:
it was a fight to the death
she or I
had to die
something of me died with her.
2.
Sivvy ordered
from the tightly clenched menu
pointing with a bandaged thumb
two glasses of milk and bread
nothing else, thank you
the waitress moved off

other tables were served hot food
but the bee keeper's daughter
shrill in convulsive chatter
shaken through the air
crackling with blue light
her bones almost wrenched from the muscles
as if, at any moment the jelly would spill out

fingered a piece of bread,
but did not eat, her milk untouched
then another mood swing:
I lost an overcoat and keys
but I had a spare set—
I sucked but not for long
the sweet and sickly atmosphere
of 23 Fitzroy Road, London NW1

on the wall
outside the front door
a blue plaque to W. B. Yeats
which I knew
was mine too
when I became Christ and Keats

place a dozen yellow roses
in the empty oven, door open
towel inside for a pillow

O my children

Kevin Kiely

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Cypress

Cypress—
you stand proud
giraffe-pride

and with disdain
if you had eyes
your limbs

aloft towards the Roman blue sky
and your dome of hair
makes you human, seasonal

with tufts of grey
you are vain cypress
with a green sneer

do you really raise clouds
with those streaked limbs and branches
do you shake the banner of swallows

a fluttering black dragon net
and healing bird music
with expansive grandeur

above the city
but you, cypress are unimpressed
since we need each other

amidst the enduring magnificence
the possibility that all is mystery
let us share the spoils, many ruins

have ghosts that long for restoration
trees flourish eternally where the poet
walked you stand in line and adorn

I sing of you and make your name
while you grant me song
we are friends in spectacle
read in cycles of history
and the sun’s corona
least in the fields of
emotional life

Kevin Kiely
Homage To Thomas Macgreevy

Pound praised you in a letter
'promising' typed Ezra
Not in the cast of thousands
In those necropolyptic Cantos
Yesterday a slim volume of real poems
The surprise of some translations
All wrapped in acknowledgements annotations
and an introduction

The cool gallery lit by many a gem
A Poussin amongst them
Beside your portrait by O'Sullivan
The speakers at the launch
Tried to answer some questions
About the long silence on your part
Bound by the laws of Baudelaire
The Holy Spirit of Creation
The need to sign cheques
The civil servicing of Art

Afterwards at Toque Poussin
Someone remarked sadly:
He went down with a touch of the Rimbaud's
I pray to Tom who was a kind of saint
And a patriot.
The waitress spoke English badly
There was plenty of ice
Our coffee delayed
While old café songs of Paris were played
Would this city suffice?

Kevin Kiely
the ‘Inbox’ lights up with ‘Bethany’ and clarions like room service from the distant past: ‘Ride the shock waves of changes, full circles, and settling or shaken perspectives...’
the feverish reply launched into the echoing miles of ether towards Washington in the Pacific North West:
‘how bleak the backlit Plutonian shores of Sligo...’
I am conflicted between images of you: one is the female crucified Jesus. Sunday school revolt, ideational acting out of the repeated headline: ‘Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani’
a saddle of calligraphy on each thigh from the ink-jetting pen

anoint these sheets with the mask of your face
strut those ghostly blue outline tattoos of Kentucky:
the speeding boxcar, the saltshaker amidst healed scars and burns, while civilized life inscribed in law demands life be lived: ‘Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani’—what kind of lawful life produced
a phrenology on your Lempicka thighs
in the white room that grew goose-flesh walls
the cuts around kneecaps released the flowing lifelines of wine down your sloping limbs

and through you, a lover can enter the house of figs
the hazel eyes of the sphinx burn with fiery gems
one eye for sunrise, the other sunset
from where does our hope, our joy, our ecstasy come—from our tragedy, is your answer. Yet, your post-romantic ‘goodbye until.’ Turning into the alley with a wilting hand ‘some things last a long time.’ The moon shines stark from a broken cloud illuminating the goddess and her incense cigarette. ‘Some things last forever.’

I shall rise from the dead by your anointing
I shall not need to ask of this world in this world:
shall any woman forgive our desertion? shall any woman forgive herself for falling in love with a man?
and the leaves of the fig tree
shroud their fruit in the gale, beyond tragedy
Observe The Poe-Heads Of Ulster Marching Towards Faber & Faber

I give you two fingers in a definite V for victory
This art thrives on excellence: not wet-turf stack poetry
I could never dig with Seamus's sheep-shaped head
And between forefinger and thumb hold a laptop instead

These careerist Norn Iron poets hijacked language to build a lego-fake
Hyped up rural idolatry parading as literary earthquake
While Charlie Monteith fawned on the London Literary Press via Faber & Faber
British guilt exalted a daisy chain of re-verse-men smudging on Paper & Paper
Frog-marching poeds cashed-in as civil rights fought wrongs in the North
Alone: the real suffering people linked broken arms and marched forth

In a dirty tricks fix vacuous movement of empty mouth
Akin to many of the mushroom-dolmen presses in the South
Fitted green carpet-poets finding a slim volume audience at home
Nostalgia for farm, kitchen, pigsty, and the sub-Kavanagh bog-longing poem

Imagine bleating sheep dressed in homespun ill-fitting woolly kilts
And dull little po-hems like turf-smoke signals, basically: stilted verse on stilts
But this cunning clique worked up a jumble of politics to blame and shame us
And a pretence to proxy history while their aim was fame and be famous
They made ideal Media fillers betwixt the Troubles and Full Page Ads
A bunch of self-exiled, non-artistic have-nots and talentless-never-hads

Rising on the sectarian tide, implying they were speaking for their people
As they pumped up their Plastic Paddy Parnassian Folkloric steeple
Parading dialect as a hallmark: yet, overtly steeped in political journalese
Fooling many with their coughs and preambles and non-literature-tease
Nothing more than a crinkle suited hackademic phalanx pulling strings
Through insider institutional congregational readings
Keeping their bleary dreary eyes on the Guardian, TLS and the BBC
London, Boston, New York, the Irish Times and RTÉ

These pretender dumb-pome-men with exported clipped tones
Poe-Biz behind the scenes & bookings on the phones
Ambassadorial culture-salesfolk who traded IN their native NI
Hotly pursuing reputations for which they would die
Rather than spend a week in Belfast, Armagh or Derry
Unless with a film crew, taxis, and dinners preceded by Tio Pepe Fino sherry

These were the dry-wall poet-spoofs, truly northern, truly rooted
Never beaten, jailed, bombed out, harassed or hooted
Living safely and squarely in Southern Ireland vainly and gainly
Writing North of North about its pastoral landscape mainly
Metaphor gone mad, slack cadenced vocality of the locality
A poetry of fauna, flora and the threshing machine's practicality

These were a Fallacy all in one queue:
Paulin & Murphy & Mahon & Montague
Heaney& Longley & Bugaboo Muldoon
Inhabiting their Shangri-La-La Land
North by North of Pseudo-Brigadoon
Frauds posing with putrid books in hand
Soft-slippered yodelers out of tune

Never exposed for being right royal hypocrites
Poking poetry-hams at home, at America and at peace-loving mainland Brits
Ireland’s self-styled scribe-heroes spewing fashionable green ink
Of ploughs, potatoes, hayforks, yokel-clichés and the jawbox sink
Pulling a fast one with nod and wink
Smarter than their public don't you think
They connived, cajoled and curried favour
These cowards abandoned their next door neighbour
And are outed here for their Caper & Caper
Observe that the poe-headers of Ulster marched towards Faber & Faber

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Kevin Kiely
Professor-poet invited
the Mexican poet, the Indian poet and the Jamaican poet
to his house for dinner
greeting them with
'The rumours of my being famous are greatly exaggerated.'

Professor-poet's wife had also invited
neighbours, a he-poet and a she-poet
who brought along their baby daughter.
During dinner the Mexican poet announced
that he had two sons
who were
fine young poets.

Professor-poet asked the she-poet
'Will your daughter be a poet when she grows up?'
She may well be, was the answer.
Later she asked him when he spoke of his two sons
'Do you think there will be a poet in either of them?'
He confidently replied,
'probably in both.'

Kevin Kiely
George rules from his riverside bookshop
four storeys high along rue de la Bûcherie
Proudly claiming Walt Whitman as his ancestor—
Shelf after laden-shelf rising like wine racks in the city
The roving eye can soft focus anywhere—
a Faber translation of Laments by Jan Kochanowski

for free accommodation upstairs—you must read a book a day
tend the shop now and then, live on pancakes
chocolate croissants or whatever your budget will allow—
two Londoners outside the kitchen on clarinet and fiddle
play Jazz suite No 2 (Shostakovitch)

George seems oblivious among the backpacked youth at table
facing a cracked plate
a fork with sugar on the prongs and a pot of honey (miel)
as he plans another week’s rota
for this Shangri-la
where the living and the dead
confront each other

Kevin Kiely
The Uncrucified Buddha

He squats all gold
unpierced by nails—
head crowned by sunlight
no blood stains, no spear or vinegar
hand raised, the scent of rosewater

you must sit
like a withered tree before a cliff
and be absolutely quiet in concentration

the fragile flesh is sheer gold
tingling with diamonds
the seed-blossoms of the body
float upwards into empty space

inside—outside are equally lit
the eyes begin to blaze
and everything brightens
as if you were in a cloud and felt no gravity

the golden flower is crystallized

and desires cause freefall
as you go through delusions undestroyed
and contemplate the emptiness at the centre
being empty is the strongest delusion

Kevin Kiely
To Conjure Up

I went absent leaving you for Chicago
The hotel became a hospital
I signed my committal form at reception

At the Sears Tower in the elevator,
A silver walled room, powered by jet engines
Thrust me with strangers to the 110th floor

From this height through the windows - the lights
In the towers of the city, the moving lights
Of traffic and street lights still, far below.

A snowy cloud passed across the window, dimming
The scene of the black and the lights and the towers
With you missing I could only conjure you up.
And then I said: I will give you all of this city

Below us from this mad height if you bow down
And adore me. I bow down and adore you by the waters
of Lake Michigan breaking and breaking in waves without salt

And she said: I will bow down and adore you.
So I gave her the city
With pleasure I gave her the city of Chicago

Kevin Kiely
When It's Over—(Old Sonnet Form)

I've lost you then or is it you've lost me
and once more on the newsfront what a mess
I did, you did go deep we both felt free
it's wiser not to damn but somehow bless
the will's the way go onwards, all that stuff
life's beyond belief and might have been
not long now you know and that's no bluff
who'll keep me clear, unseen and seen
how far, how far and then how soon it's done
after the feast, the vinegar until
new gossip and in the memory of two or one
cool reason, lessens the bitter pill
It's nice to keep in touch and have a friend
Forget, look up, remember there's an end

Kevin Kiely