

Time to Listen

Poetry Day Ireland 2020

With Cavan Library Service
and writer Heather Brett



A Daughter Going Home

The way I go, it's a hundred
and ten miles, door to door:
familiar, do-it-in-my-sleep roads,
full of country lanes and
byways, short cuts and lay-bys,
full of roundabouts and dimples,
scenic routes, the odd village,
through at least six separate counties,
numerous suburbs, countless boroughs.

I court so many fine lines and borders.
Half the time, I don't know if I'm
coming or going, unsure
if I'm fleeing from or hurtling towards
catastrophe or crisis,
approaching an adventure or escaping
en route from the demons.
Held by a past, like Telemachus,
I seem doomed to travel forever.

My daughter joins me before
I'm out of Cavan, that long stretch
beyond Loreto, where she sauntered
down to meet me a lifetime ago,
when rhododendrons blazed cerise
and life still held wonder.
It is here I redeem her; here I accept
her loss as mine; the memories
unspool, mile by twisting mile.

I don't stay too long at either
destination. As urgent to leave
as I was to arrive, I can't settle.
I think about how people will always
mean more than places: how life
has that repetitive urge to keep going,
how, after everything, I'm still looking.
Signposts say so very little. Coming or going
there's an innate, ingrained, instinct for home.

Heather Brett