

Time to Listen

Poetry Day Ireland 2020

With Cavan Library Service
and writer Heather Brett



Parsonage (1891)

The Cedar Lebanon has spread
wildly
and offers only a modicum of shelter
the sparse but burgeoning branches
in an almost quizzical reach,
rifle towards mama's circular rose beds,
over the croquet lawn.

This damn chair, these legs,
this pain.

I have not forgotten busy, bleak Glasgow,
that guttural lilt
nor my King's Own brothers,
and though I wish I was with them still
I've been ousted, paid off,
limped back to Ireland
to Corravahan.

This house is thwarted;
Still, enough for the sermons
to resonate long after;
enough for the meandering build
to sprawl through the acres.
Cool Portland stone in the hall
where the hound likes to sleep,
and sometimes I swear I can still hear
Mary calling from the stairs,
that final planting of her feet
just an echo that's been around for years.

Arthur gone as well
another foreign disease
taking hold in an Irish climate.
That Kilmore vault will claim us all...
Solomon and I rattle quietly around here;
a pall over the house and village;
wives have a habit of dying,
and a son follows.
Ours, sadly, is not the strongest constitution.

But today the air is tart and sweet
from the orchard,
the scent of apples, fallen crabs,
Kerry Pippins, McIntosh.

A late summer sun warms the grounds,
elongates the shadow of my books
over the edge of the table.

I must have dozed. For a spell there
I could smelt the wild olive trees,
hear the ratcheting of a Spencer rifle
in the background:

And I swore I was running, striding up the
round of a drumlin towards a circle of saplings,
the underside of their leaves pale
and beckoning, the fluttering whisper
almost an applause.

Corravahan!

Corravahan!