



Where the Three Rivers Meet

Aine MacAodha

Argotist Ebooks

Cover image by Aine MacAodha

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Aine MacAodha is a poet whose words bring forth her inner light and fire. She **is** 'The Fire of the Gaels,' for Aine herself is an Epic Hero, an "every woman" who has lived through tumultuous times, troubles, and highs. Hers is the deepening of the human experience, placed in poetic form. Aine is a voice of both history and present. Her voice and memories serve as needed reminders of a time in Ireland that should not be forgotten, whilst also presenting a link to the history of Ireland and the future. As a poet, she reveals the trinity of the 'Goddesses of the deep', the Mother, and the Friend in all of her poems. It has been my great pleasure to work with her both as an editor/publisher, and as a friend.

(Karen Bowles, Luciole Press)

Where the Three Rivers Meet

The Sperrin Mountains

Dander over the peat clad slopes
find the ancient past alive
in the bones of the Sperrins.

Pigeon top; a silent view.
Absorb the secrets of the mass rock
were faceless priests prayed in whispers.

Beagmore stone circles retell the
hardships of bronze age man
strong, creative, protective of family clan.

The Ogam stone of Greencastle uniquely
signed by the early communicators
of this green landscape.

Take a dander over the Sperrins.
Sense the myths hidden in bedrock
hear the echoes of the past re-claimed.

Barnes Gap, Sperrins Region

Carved centuries ago
by the powerful elements
of wind and ice slicing
through the countryside.

Glazed now by a carpet of moss
and haunted by the hills of
Mullaghbane and Mullaghbolig
seem untouched by modern man;
apart from the odd sheep
that wandered under the fence
leaving clots of wool waving
frantically.

Tense atmosphere only solidifies
the cheek of my intrusion.

Sun plays hide n' seek
behind rocks and crevices
cooling schists once again.

Aghascrebah Ogham Stone, Ireland

I feel its supernatural pull
working its way up from the earth
and out to the universe.

Laid by pre-historic man and
un-earthed by modern farmer
searching for rich soil.

Silver almost as the November sky.
Aiming towards the heavens
like a beacon over the boundaries.

Waiting perhaps in this empty field
surrounded by hedges and bracken;
for a gathering of a kind to recall

the deep rooted origins of its
sweat bearing creators. Their
words forever notched in stone.

Into this November air
a supernatural force
draws me to it like a magnet.

Curtain Up

The morning climbs above the house.
I admire the beauty of the lifting mist.
The bleached horizons above the rooftops;
steam floating of the dewy tiles
like smoke signals.

Winding roads too small for map
marking; cut paths through the county.
The crows and blackbirds
line up on the fence
making the most of the drying puddles
and refilled nut bags; meant for
wrens and robins!

The air blanched of spring with
the odd housefly busying about.
Much too early I think.

'As long as the morning light
combs across your face,

as long as the curtains open anew;
there draws the breath of theatre'.

Waiting at the Station

The October frost drapes
the buildings in a cape
of Christmas lights.

Sparse maples asleep.
Yesterday's newspapers
gather in circles at the corner,

catching every now and then
on the steel bench
glazed in the breeze.

A road sweeper
wrapped in thought
nods to himself.

Morning noises appear.
Milk floats, post vans,
buses stopping and starting.

The odd greeting from
one driver to the other
tired of the drill.

I think of your transformation
from country girl to
college girl.

How letting go was worth it,
seeing how beautiful you've grown.

Fire of the Gaels

She is every woman
who struggles for survival
in a world of prisons
of one form or another.
Her stories, etched on the
landscapes of the universe.
She is the mouth
of the Blackwater,
the secrets of the Alder,
the writing on the caves
and the shedder of light.
She is the blueprints
of the past,
the wishes of the unborn,
the spirit of the crops
and the heat of the sun
bursting on buds.
She's the midges on the lough,
the guardian of the wells,
the bones of the earth
and the ties that bind
by spirit and blood.
She's the songs sung so often
renewed on the lips of the young.
Her tongue fiery can cut like an axe
or sooth like a lullaby.
She is goddess of the people,
the fire on the hills.
She's the shadow on the stones
glinting on river beds.
The breath of a new morning,
and a beacon in the night.
She is every woman.
She is Aine,
fire of the gaels.

Beurla *

In the confines of my mind
I converse in my native tongue;
recall early school lessons,
is mise, slan agat go foil, gradh.

They fade like my childhood,
warmed on knees by open fires.
Songs of Wexford and Vinegar Hill
fused with Tyrone's bardic thrill.

Secondary school brought the troubles,
beurla, the fading of the Irish tongue
lost in the distance of war and
forbidden to utter out of the home.

My words travel through me
like the oak saturated in bogs
awaiting the re-newel of better times.
Acknowledged, embraced and refined.

* Beurla is Irish for the English language.

Bundoran, County Donegal

Embracing the salt curtain of the green Atlantic
sway to and fro towards me;
waves rest on the algae rocks rounded to a
smooth knob. Belts of seaweed find resting places
in pools of water clear as amber.

I hear the children's screams from the ghost train
shuttling in the distance, but the Atlantic calls
me back towards it again. Stained by history,
there's something about this ocean that calls
to me, healing my winter worn trunk.

Perhaps it's there, deep in the blue where I'll find
solace. Where old wrecks filled with tales
from when time began, uniting stories of inland
folk finding gods in the wilderness of boglands
and meeting goddesses of the deep.

Banba

Tara, Ireland's spiritual home,
cries out to ancient hearts,
save her from the greed of fools
who'll rip her soul apart.

In myths we recall our living past,
woven as carpet on the landscape.
In stones, trees and bog;
in birds, horse and dog.

The stitches of the wisdom keepers
relay story, song and poem,
secure in the bright knowledge
that their words will have a home.

Oh sacred bile, Oh graveyard Yew,
the Hawthorn and the Oak;
the Hazel, Alder and the Rowan,
the Willow and the faery folk.

Pay homage to the spirits of Tara,
the ones who went before
the Warriors, Bards and Kings,
the Queens and many more.

Losing My Religion

It wasn't easy growing up
around the fortress
of a garrison town.
When the troubles
were our second coats,
fear our constant companion.
The instinctual things
a teenager had to know
by heart, by soul.
What side of the street
was yours to tread?
Cover up the school
uniform in the town,
or it sealed your fate
like a patriotic tattoo,
or a flag always flying;
when certain colours
out of safety zones meant
a potential beating.
Knowing to keep your
head down when the
landrovers followed you home.
Divided by a war we didn't
fully understand.
When escape meant the border
singing Irish songs of freedom,
horslips and Celtic rock
without the watchful eye of
bigots.

Now the shroud of war is lifted,
I can envelope myself in the beauty
of my own country without fear or
regret.

Either Side of the Headlines

You waltzed on orange lino
between hearth and couch,
lilting like a spring sparrow;
securing a strong arm on Ma's back,
not once out of step.

News headlines guaranteed silence.
Your face etched in thick lines
enhanced by concentration.
Ma presents corn beef and tomatoes,
which you eat noisily without teeth.

Coal spits from the unguarded fire, sending
smoke signals from the half-circle rug.
My daydreams, fractured by cutlery,
moving on the empty plates.

Haiku

Omagh from above –
a butterfly in full bloom,
spreading her wings.

Scars on the hillsides –
gorse no longer wave
careless youth.

Spiders' patterns
on conifers
wearing a fine shawl.

Cracks in the pavement,
ants pulling
a fly.

Daughter Dear

Must you count every calorie?
Every ounce of fat in the shopping bag?
She's disgusted at the amount of them
in one lousy biscuit.

We argue the toss about the taste
of full milk and creamy butter,
and 'How in the hell do ye eat fried bacon?'

I know she has a point; yet
I play it down just in case this
takes over her life and she eats
nothing at all, she at that age

when everyone in the magazines are whisper thin,
and without blemish.

Whisperings

Our ancient bloodlines
are calling to us;
interrogating us
with wisps of insight.

They are turning
in their boggy graves,
surfaced over time.

They rise out from
small lakes hidden
on the land.

Through dreams at
night, and ponderings
of the daylight.

Among glen and forests,
and from branches of the
thorn and elder.

From the angler's rod
cast on rivers. On salmon
longing for the open seas.

In tales, myths and poetry
their marks will not fade
like snapshots in the sun.

Our lands are piled
high and low, deep and wide
with blue prints of a time when
spoken signals were the headlines.

Our ancestors are turning
in their graves.

Luna

Losing shadows that follow
from these troubled acres
is hard going at times.

When it's those same shadows
you seek to understand
what it all came down to.

Three in the morning brings relief;
nature is more calmer and cools
to a creaking lullaby.

Some birds sleep sound.
The urban ones
blether through the night.

The moon solemnly gives orders
to orchestrate the night crawlers
on missions. She casts shadows

in dimly lit corners of the globe.
She'll never be the sun,
blitzing the crops, warming

the shadows.
But she'll always be the catalyst,
calling you back to the past.

Loneliness

Loneliness has a bite,
not a nibble,
but a razor sharp bite.

Morning flounces openly
showing off its tie-dyed light.
The hills beyond my window,
glazed by the mist
blown in off the Atlantic,
fusing Donegal, Sligo and Tyrone
in a painters paradise of shade.

The starlings argue for space
on the corrugated garage roof.
Unnerved by the chatter on the floor-court,
they've made a tiny field on the roof,
green as the hills.

Loneliness has a bite, razor sharp,
and I need it like the views I see.
It calls me back to nature,
makes me more aware of the innocence
and beauty of the forgotten.

Mise Eire

Talk to me of bogs,
of blankets on the land.

Talk to me of myths
you have at your command.

Tell me of Cu Chulainn,
the hero hound of Ulster,

the battles of the Tain Bo
and the warriors of Munster,

the progress of the firbolgs.
The De danaans on the hill

remind me of our legends
of folklore through the quill.

Talk to me of forests,
of flora and fauna there.

Talk to me of mountains
in Tyrone and in Kildare.

Tell me now of the future
of equality in the land.

Speak to me of serenity,
so the tribes can understand.

Oak Lake, County Tyrone

It's easy to imagine
these scooped out hollows
were once filled with ice;
melting as the did stamping
kettle holes on the landscape.

The lake waltzes to and fro
like a child mesmerized
by magical stories voiced
by an old teller of tales.

Its edges flanked with an audience of
purple moss, pink cranberry flower
and the burnt orange of summer gorse,
all paying homage by showiness.

A clump of rushes moves slightly.
I think of childhood tales of
the watershee luring one off
to the silver world of faeries.

The light of the day now slipping
ever so peacefully behind the
peaks of the Sperrins. I shall go now
and take its essence with me,
to sooth my night quests ahead.

Morning Has Broken

The early morning frost leaks
through the old frames.
Frozen webs leave intricate patterns
that should be framed for prosperity.

Shadows flank the hills as mist
gathers like midges on Lough Muck.
Cows huddle for heat at the hedge,
leaving billowing clouds of breath.

Below, the newly built Texaco garage
begins the alien noises of the day.
Car doors slam, hydraulic breaks scream,
and school kids fill up with energy.

Then like an open wound, the horizon
splits the grey morning, bringing with it
a baked setting full of challenges and hope
for coming hours.

Mirror Image

I see him stroll along Bridge St.
in his chef's outfit,
with his I-Pod firmly
placed in his ears;
hair growing out of one style,
curls at the collar.
He's got his grandpa's dimple
pressed urgently on his chin;
touched by the angels I'm told.

The spitting image of the grandpa;
the way he nods hello,
head slightly lowered,
eyes raised in a half-shy way;
a moon crest grin.
His arms swallow me
in an umbilical comfort.
Strong now, his surly grip
releases worries that I carry.

Morning Stroll

Petrol spills from engines
glisten like magic rainbows
in the wind cursed mid-day.
Red robins leave watery drips
on jeans and T-shirts
flapping on clothes lines,
dotted at the gardens of Okane.
I'm annoyed still at the
new great Northern road,
carved seven miles into
the Tyrone countryside.
Still, there's snickets and
fences to master before
I'm on the old road again.
Traffic now slows for the
odd tractor and a pair of
fast walkers with earphones.
A crafty sheep dog darts
along the hedges, ushering
rebel sheep. A whistle in
the wind brings them into
line again.
My shawl catches on the overgrown
Brambles. I laugh as if somehow
they do it for badness.
Crows squabble high in roosts.
Leaves shower the road and me.
The heat has brought out midges.
They hover at the burn that creeps
along the bank, making
its way to the lough.

Night Falls Soon

The powder pink evening
combs the sky of summer,
like a comet trailing.
My eyes dance the last waltz
of daylight hours.

A fiery thrush bobs its tail,
singing out its last chorus
whilst gathering up the young,
dallying below in town.

Trees in eyeshot
fan the horizon in gestures
of a soft wave, calling the
night creatures, return to
the hedges and stone walls.

For the sun has retreated,
and the mistress of the moon
has beckoned her night creatures
on missions over field and stream.

The wail of the sleek tomcat
serenades the urban air, drifting
out to rural pathways – on the prowl.

Old Societies

Rain takes on a silver sheen
thundering past the window,
encouraging the worm to rise.

Already the blackbird furrows
with his yellow beak, knowing
what lies beneath.

I think of pre-historic societies
leaving their stamp on the land in
stone circles, megalithic tombs,
standing stones and raths.

I imagine they were signposts
pointing the safest way ahead
to the nearest village; gathering
points, perhaps. Their own
creations dotted about
the landscape.

I feel a
certain kinship with them – those
who came before.

The worm: I wonder what its
aura holds? What has it come upon
whilst pushing clay,
slipping into worlds unseen?

I wish the rain to cease,
the blackbird to scarper
and the worm to live another day.

Oldcroghan Man *

This island is a living carpet,
worn by clans of cousins who
weaved into the land
a pattern not for the
the untrained eye.

Oldcroghan man,
baked in this oven of peat,
symbolizes our spent lineage
of boundaries and fields.

Beheaded and tortured,
he stood tall as a pine tree.
Who was this nameless lad?
A high king, killed in ritual,

or killed in a jealous rage?
Was it a warning to other youths
who may yearn for the new,
denouncing the old?

I wear a leather twang like his,
woven with love on May Day.
The hands of Croghan man
hold no labourers welts,
but groomed nails; ideally cleaned.

He joins others that came before:
Meeybradden Woman and Gallagher man.
They come to remind us to read the bog
chapter by chapter; learn from ghosts of the past.

* Oldcroghan man is the latest body to be unearthed after 2000 years in the bog. Found in Co. Offley Ireland.

Endings

The teens have called time on life
before it's even begun.
Slavery of a sort hangs in the air.
They starve themselves
in a time of fruition;
convince themselves that
they're too ugly to go out.
Trapped by their own demons,
visual demons that scrape
at their youthful bodies,
drilling, thin, thin, thin,
from the magazines on news stands;
from the plasma screen
in their bedrooms.
They don't believe in flaws,
the odd spot, scar, ruddy skin,
eye slightly bigger than the other.
They have bought into perfection;
captive also to drugs that alter their minds.
For some, there's no way back.

They've called time on life,
before it's even begun.

Lough Derg St. Patrick's Purgatory, 1979

Tricha and I were punks
in the war years.
To rid us of defiance
our Mas' sent us
off to Lough Derg.

The basilica rose out of
the morning mist like a vision
out of a Hammer horror movie.
The boat ride fearsome,
as the oldies prayed with the bishop.
This was it three days fasting,
no sleep and no shoes allowed.
We followed the elders,
kneeling, praying and walking.
The all-night vigil blasted us like
a raging argument.
Rain fell hard off the Pettico Hills,
wind from the Atlantic.
Stopping at cells with names
of early missionaries: St Brigit, Brendan,
Columba, Patrick, Davog
and Molaise.
For three days food was black tea and dry toast.
We touched the resources of spirit within.
We thought of home, of

'My perfect cousin' and 'anarchy'.

We were heroes then,
amid the barricades.

Black 47

Often in times of deep meditation,
walking through the Tyrone hills,
I'll stand at a fence and ease my eyes
out over the Sperrin mountain range.
The fields so lush and full of fertility,
the hum of agricultural goings-on.
The views take me by surprise.

I think of the "starvation" that swallowed
my ancestors – an image that stings the air still.
Spirits roam these hills covered in mass graves,
or deep in lanes where they fell, starved of food;
food that was packed in ships bound for England,
to feed the chosen few,
whilst the poor, here, ordered to eat only potatoes,
died of structured starvation.

I can't imagine what it's like to go hungry,
to be tortured by the power of it,
to watch your child fade and die,
to see a race almost wiped out; a race who
tilled that same fertile land.
Who is culpable? What of the mass exodus?
Was there trickery involved? Greedy landowners
offering ships bound for new lands
where land, food and pay was promised.
Thousands died on the rough seas.

Others settled, always loving their spiritual home.
Who will acknowledge this crime
against the Irish nation, a nation whose scars
are plain to see even to the present day?
Healing will begin only when we look
into the past, where shadows linger and questions
hang in the air. Dark Rosaleen still awaits an apology.

Remembering

When old ladies in
sheepskin jackets and
headscarves walk by,
I think of you.

The secrets of motherhood
drift into the air,
in wisps of violets and
wild roses.

On the bells, too,
of the sacred heart chapel,
ringing out the angelus,
in the click of rosaries
in lofty chapels, in
the call of the corncrake
from distant hills,
and from the headlines
in newspapers
that drift along dusty streets
of sleepy inland villages.

Your headscarf knotted tight
under the chin brings a
narrowness to your face,
framing the Viking nose and
Vinegar Hill pride.

The wisdom of motherhood
dwells deep inside of me
like a well I can dip into,
when sorely needed.

St Colmcille

I think of this monk
born on our barren lands.
A time when blanket bogs
covered most of its surfaces,
and the sea the only way out.

How his mother was visited by an angel
saying he would spread faith
and an understanding of Christianity
throughout Ireland and beyond.

Colmcille understood both tribes.
Pagans he knew well, Christianity
he was learning.
A foot in both worlds.

I think of Jesus wandering in the desert,
battling demons in the baking sun.
Colmcille's desert: a horizon met with
deserted bog lands and mountainous hills
from Derry to Tyrone.

Mother

I seek you in the lakes of Tyrone,
the lesser known ones whose beauty
remains unblemished by progress.

In the curling streams at war
with the elements, and whose
very existence is threatened by
housing developments.

I look for you as summer coughs up
its last songs of the season.

I seek your words in her breath,
in the secrets of motherhood
asleep in the elderly, yearning
recall once again.

I seek it, too, in the faces of youth,
in the songs they sing from
the concrete forests they live in.

I also seek it in me,
when dark clouds
gather up a storm.

That Age

I think I've reached it:
this middle ground in life.
Crows feet emerge without
negotiation; bunches of
greying hair hover like
mist on the October hedge.
My offspring have fled the
roost, making their own now.
Wasn't easy being Ma and Da.
I think of the failed mixed
marriage, the 80's being a
time of change —
fusing bodhran and lambeg
was no easy task.
I'm beginning to resemble
my mother. Her frown and
pondering nature, her hand on
hip, stares out to the horizon ...
my father's need for the headlines ...
I stand still in a changing field,
like the Ogam stones of Tyrone,
grey and pointing skyward.
There are many tracks before me,
all leading down some road.
Morning pains subside in
the summer heat, like the
creaking wood of the stairs.
I think I've reached it:
endured the dark nights of the soul.
What now?

Thoughts on the Wing

It's 4.30 in the morning.
Wild birds sleep none
nowadays. Their talk
in the moonless night
takes my thoughts,
as dawns sheet appears
among the diamond sky.
They float over brook
and riverbed,
under ancient bridges
amid fools gold that's
smoothed by salmon and
rainbow trout.
The May bush lifts them again,
further afield to Lock Erne,
Devenish Island, Killybegs
where the fishermen gather
to read the ocean;
to the sifting sands
of Rossnowlagh Strand
were winter dwells, awaiting
spring's coat;
returning home refreshed,
just as dawn bursts her seams.

Torn

Between love and hormonal shoals of friends.
Estranged from birth flock
without the pack seem lost.
A fawn dislodged from mother,
struggling to locate semi-safe ground.

Her heart warmed by another's fiery arrow.
Confused, yet amused by gestures and similarities
of thoughts.

The angst inside I assure will subside,
when no longer can she play tug-of-war
in the playing fields of youth.

A warm smile displays, like a cabinet,
newfound pearls of wisdom:
that one day she'll walk without the safety net.
Sure of balance
Sure of love.

The Fiddler

He cosies it under the chin,
or thereabout,
like a favourite scarf
from college days.
The music already forming in
his mind's eye.
He's played this air a thousand times,
yet each time it surges from
a different notion.
The horsehair bow
gallops a few times in practice
for the main event.
The listeners, young and old,
heed the waltz with arms
outstretched.
He rests on the waltz.
'Give me your hand'
The dancers glide in perfect
sway to the fiddler's tune.
Like a shaman he leads them
to another time when music
filled the night air under stars.
His ears are on alert, watching
for one wrong beat.
The dancers care not,
they are lost in the music of the fiddler.

Annaghmakerrig 2002 *

The big house greets with an air of mystery,
petitioning to the gods a poem or song
to touch all our yesterdays.

The lake pretends to scowl at night and
wraps the waiting horizon in thought.
The ruthless breeze is laden with insight.

Songs find their way through the air.
The hearth inherits the fallen spruce,
whilst artists gather their cares.

Spoken signals gather like crochet,
fermenting works that ooze out in dreams,
and filter into daylight masterpieces.

* Annaghmakerrig is a house in Co. Monahan, left in the will of theatre director Tyrone Guthrie for artists of all disciplines to "create" away from the interferences of the world.

My Sort of Day

This is the sort of day
that memories weave a carpet
in shades of fallen leaves
or in tones of winter's coat.

The sort of day
when love greets
with a pregnant smile
below the baked horizon.

The sort of day
the Tyrone hills emerge
through the mist like gods
awaiting the day's offerings.

The sort of day
cobwebs freeze lunar patterns
on hawthorn bushes
like maps to the silver world.

This is the sort of day
wars should end,
haters make amends
and disease should be no more.

The Sin Eater

Together we sat on the confessional bench,
listening to the click of heels on mosaic tiles
awaiting the queue to die.

A lady who lived in God's house
watched us girls with her salmon eye
and every move we made.

Whispered penances showered the chapel.
Orderly shuffling from oldies denoted
our turn now; our sins would be eaten.

The gridded partition creaked like old knuckles.
I almost forgot: 'Bless me father', as my
knees located a softer spot on the floor.

Beads sang in a distracting manner.
Father Brown's pressing vowels asked after my sins.
My soul now white, I returned to the bench.

Starlings at Dawn

They flounce into my morning,
just as dawn crawls over the roof, and
squawk to locate their newly found songs;
eager to appease mother who shimmies
to and fro with mother's pride.

The corner of my roof carries noises.
Claws scrape pleadingly on wood,
discontented squabbles from one who lost the worm.
Mother squeezes her narrow body through a corner crevice;
her silhouetted wings accurately glide into place.

It quietens for a spell, until its time for a coaxed flight.
Then it's my turn to rouse the household sound asleep in the far room,
away from the bird songs.

Dear Sir

Dear Sir,
please excuse my son's absence.
He slept in.
We slept in.
The night before he studied into the small hours
the mechanics of skateboarding,
counting new bruises and fading others.
How he can "ollie" sets of steps without broken marrow.
It releases his anger,
how the words of Curt Cobain relate to his 180-degree kick-flip,
and the thrill of a half pipe,
that being 16 messes with his head and
no one understands.
And how is it fair his girlfriend lives ten miles away,
and he's no car?
Why work at the weekend tires him,
and grunge pulls him through.
So Sir, may I call you sir?

I hope you understand my son's absence this time.

Wet July '07

The late evening sky
clamps its joyless cloud
upon the market town.

Cattle in the field beyond
trudge towards the gate
looking depressed.

Without the TV forecast
I read the patterned clouds.
Plain and purl columns

knit their way towards me.
Smoke signals, from the Victorian
houses on Gallows Hill.

That's all it takes
to ignite the fires here.
I await the storm, prepared.

Stones

I can't pass a stream,
river or seashore today
without seeking them.

The smoothed shapes,
worn by the waves
or carried by the escape

of mountain springs, flowing
toward brooks and burns,
drawing upon them a golden glow.

They take pride of place
on my window sills,
on doilies made of lace.

Others might collect pottery
or bone china,
I have an indoor rockery.

Omagh: Seat of Chiefs

Housing secrets down the ages
in its under-belly, and
in the layers of rock
and street names:
Castle Street, Gallows Hill,
Goal Square, Canon Hill.
Well below, the street's scant
passages lead to the heavy courthouse whose
presence dominates the town.
Voices of the past muted through its
thick granite outpouring.
The essence of its history also embedded
in the gravely basins where the three rivers meet:
the Drumragh, Camowen and the Strule.

Rivers that unite in finding their way to the
Atlantic — to cast their sins upon the waves.

Tree House at Sloughen Glen

On our way to Sloughen Glen, deep in the hills of Drumquin,
we hardly notice the climb; yet feel it in our fume-filled lungs.
Out of the side of a hill, amid brambles and giant ferns,
a shell of a house appears with postcard views out over
the Tyrone countryside.

The gift of life still grows from its un-thatched roof: a gift
in the form of a blackthorn tree. It grows with pride
up through the rooms holding, I'm sure, stories in its trunk.
Memories of a time when its hearth was lit and life flourished.

I think of the family who may have lived there:
children playing in the yard, a few livestock, life.

I listen to the quiet sounds of spring, and remember that
the regeneration of small towns has crept nearer and nearer
to the beauty spots. One day this may well be gone.

Perhaps great grandchildren will return one day,
seeking their ancestral home. They may;
and find life grows there still.

Where Man Fails

I see the beauty in the clear winter moon,
spraying its steel haze over the old town.

Where man fails,

nature does its best; instilling life among
the rubble and ruins of houses and parks.

Where man fails,

the elements rage at the world with warnings
and threats of disasters.

Where man fails,

again, I see these familiar blanket bogs;
and find hope in the solitude of them.

A Prayer to the Integrity of Words

Bless the verbs and nouns that
carry rivers of verse in their hour of need.

Bless their totality of wisdom,
greeting morality with novels amassed.

Usage, bringing tribal flouncing and
indecent drifting.

Without the integrity of words
our clans may never meet or greet,
for many ensembles would slither unheard.

A Cheated Spouse

I study your eyes;
they waltz slowly,
exposing the pain
and sorrow of a
cheated spouse.

With the stubbornness of youth
you refuse a tear,
like a star dulled with the
desertedness of distance;
memories of love, then,
when hearts leaped in unison.

The tribal greeting of dewy lips,
the sting of the lovers' tiff.

It's the eyes that dance death,
lost in socket and bone;
the cheated spouse now alone.

I look into your eyes;
with no surprise you refuse
animation of memory with rage —
as I think I would.

Native Speakers

I envy your tongue,
how the silvery words evoke
the layered past of home.
Snippets recalled from early
youth slip out in dreams
during the day-light hours;
in particles of conversations
on radio Telefis Eireann,
wheezing from Da's old wireless
that needed time to heat
for clearer contact.
I can't translate without
a book to help me,
yet I don't want to.
The words
of your poems
speak for themselves.

About the Author



Aine MacAodha was born Ann Keys, in the North of Ireland in 1963. Her sense of place growing up amid the war in the north, and the beauty surrounding it, inspires her writing. This is her first collection of poems spanning ten years. The title of *Where the Three Rivers Meet* refers to the three rivers in Omagh that meet in the town's centre: The Strule, Drumragh and the Camowen. She also draws much of her inspiration from The Sperrin Mountains, in her native Tyrone.

Her work has appeared in various magazines and anthologies throughout Ireland (most recently in *A New Ulster*), the USA and the UK. She is a founder member of the Omagh Writers Group, The Busheaneys and The Derry Playhouse Writers, and is also a member of Haiku Ireland. In 2001, she received the Tyrone Guthrie Bursary from Omagh District Council.

She is also an avid photographer, and her photographs can be seen at:

<http://ainemacaodha.webs.com/>

<http://ainesireland.webs.com/>

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She has three grown-up children, Michaela, Penny and James.