

Three Poems of Childhood



Colin Dardis recalls his early years in Omagh

Child's Tree

My tree remembers
the small child's grandeur hopes
on the day of planting:
three seeds in far left corner
of Omagh back garden, a testament
to unburdened imagination.

The last leaf that fell this winter
is unseen, the child grown, family
moved on. Only the wind
as witness, pushing back fruits
into the ground, silencing branches
with impatient nip of hoarfrost.

My fallen bough becomes
the unknown soldier, lost symbol
of once glorious dreams, never
having seen her summer treasures
picked into apple pies
and cider glasses.

No longer a tree, it has become
a cornerstone of memory
supplanted to other stations,
sustained by a home fire
still faintly trembling
inside my child's forgiven wishes.

On Brook Road

Walking pass the Concrete Trees
in the grounds of St Chomcille's,
your father, and you, all of eight.

The day, tumbling over from
late evening gloss, you hand-in-hand,
too old now really, secure at his side.

You venture a question, in awe
by the depth of paternal knowledge.
That immortal consultancy.

It is a small moment of childhood,
tender for its inconsequence,
one more visit to the great oracle.

Twin Room

I remember nothing before the bunks,
their hulk of wood and bedspring a castle
to be conquered by tiny limbs, helping
each other to the top. The higher up
you are, the more you dream. This is fact.
My sister's voice behind the mattress,
I was the monster under her bed:

Lauren, I don't want to go to school tomorrow.
Lauren, are you asleep? I can't sleep.
Lauren, how might a car sound if it could fart?
Lauren, what would happen to us if our parents died?
All this amid the logic of playground jokes,
or how the giant came crashing down
from the beanstalk, showing too much blood.

After the loft conversion, our bungalow,
already stationed at the top of a hill,
felt taller than before, defeating each house
that slept alongside us in Thornville Park.
She moved across the hall; my brothers, upstairs;
no arguments over who should stay or go.
As our first cells split, we had to be separated.

Colin Dardis is one of Eyewear Publishing's *Best New British and Irish Poets 2016*, and an ACES '15-16 recipient from Arts Council of Northern Ireland. He is also the founder of Poetry NI.