

Evening at Coole



for Deirdre and Aileen

Ignoring a turlough's gleam
Past ancient trees,
I hurry through Pairc-na-Carraig
To reach Coole lake;

My wife and daughters keep pace,
Walking on a shawl of moss
Floods have draped across the road.
The evening's getting dark;
A blackbird sings.

My mind dwells on the walled garden
Where an antlered stag and hinds
Must graze hoof-beaten ground,
That grass-grown vestige of the house
Which nurtured a renaissance,
Then on the park where a dying beech
Retains initials great men carved.
The evening's getting dark;
A blackbird sings.

At last we turn down to the lake,
Beautiful and unspoilt as when
The poet counted nine-and-fifty swans.
Today no bell-beat of wings
Stirs its brimming, shadowy expanse,
Only the ceaseless lapping of water
Loud along the rock-fringed shore...
The evening's getting dark;
A blackbird sings.

I know that, despite their radiance,
These moments will pass like some spring flood
Which leaves but moss to mark its bounds,
And caught in Time's collapsing gyre
I shall wake up one day,

My mind a dim, deserted lake
Where once the bright ones were.
The evening's getting dark;
A blackbird sings.

Patrick Devaney's poems have appeared in Revival, The Galway Review, Boyne Berries, The Stony Thursday Book, Crannóg and other magazines. He has published eight novels, including Through the Gate of Ivory, Romancing Charlotte (written under the pen name Colin Scott), and The Grey Knight: A story of Love in Troubled Times.