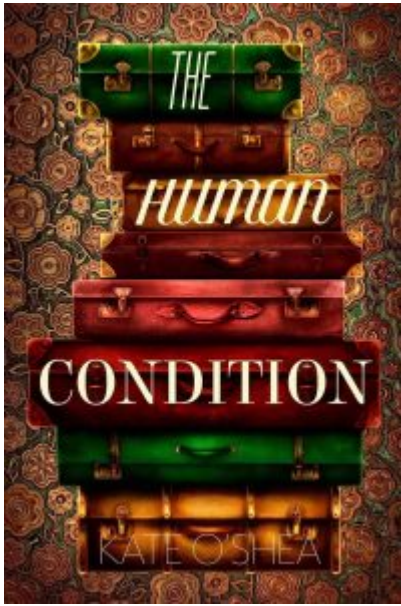


The Human Condition



'They would have thrived on our necessities.'

– Eavan Boland, *The Emigrant Irish*

Whenever I've thought about the honour of writing this over the past while, the line from Boland won't leave me alone. Poetry has that strange habit of hitting me when I'm wandering along minding my own business. Often, such as now, as a line removed from the context of its original poem. For a while, I wasn't sure why I'd been possessed by Boland's words. But the more I thought about it, the more I realised that these are poems that thrive on our necessities. Kate has a wonderful gift to take moments and sculpt poetry from their essential self – a gift I'd likely be wildly jealous of if I didn't feel so privileged to call her one of my closest personal friends.

I hope it isn't too dramatic to say that we might not be here if it wasn't for words. Obviously in the literal sense; this book simply wouldn't be, but we often overlook the catharsis of words, and in our rush to quantify and respond to the world around us it's easy to forget the music that brought us to the dance. Poems carry within them their own hermitage, and as poets we seek refuge from the world in the word, and the word refuses to turn us away.

It's all too easy to turn to art in the darkness though. We all do it, often in spite of ourselves, but as artists we have an obligation to the alchemy of hope. We're fated to what Kate calls *the art of being still* and *still being*, to the sublime intimacy of *connecting whispers in the shadows of the soul*. At the heart of art is the heart of one's self, and at the heart of one's self is often a terrifying realisation that we are all inexorably bound to one another by the spectrum of our human condition.

Over the past number of years I've felt deeply honoured to have seen these poems stretch their tentative wings and take flight, and to witness growth and deliverance as they've taken their rightful place in the world. Somebody once told me that whenever I released a poem it felt like I'm birthing a child into being. In that context I feel now like an unqualified midwife

holding a newborn; wholly in the way, unsure how I came to be here, but deeply humbled all the same to have the pleasure of playing a small part in the birth of this book. I'll leave you with the words, and in the hands of a wonderful woman, a beautiful mind and a truly precious soul.

These hands have a remarkable story to tell they have travelled an unknown, unforeseen journey, conquered it, little by little carrying out, these most unlikely, unexpected tasks of motherhood well, and now they write.

With love,
Stephen Murphy
Limerick 2017