



Songs for Ireland
Robert Herbert McClean

Preface Versus Prologue
AKA Prism of Distortion Perpetuity

In a previous IT career as a Trainee Data Harvester, I served as a virtual intern for *S.S.R.I. Data Recovery Modulator Systems Inc.*

On occasion during my training, I would be assigned 'databank cold cases' by remote-control supervisor bots. These cold cases were regularly minimal effort, entry-level lazy tech; contacting the leaseholder of the data-cloud storage space and asking them if they wanted *S.S.R.I.* to legally place the data for public purchase in a contractually sanctioned *S.S.R.I.* mega-web auction. The client data had entered the *S.S.R.I.* data protection policy period of prospective deletion. In this scenario, as noted, contact would be made with the client via *S.S.R.I. VIPESPMO* missive and a decision could be reached accordingly as to what should be done with the dead-zoned customer data load.

There was, though, one such cold case on *S.S.R.I.* record that could not, under any current or potential circumstances, be traced to the supposed contact whom originally rented the data-cloud access licence. This identity in question: an elusive, bizarro, nanotech entrepreneur known only as *Principle Executive Producer*, Kulturite Representative and CEO of the digitax registered *Capstone Corporation*. This shady operation, long since canned kaput, left their *S.S.R.I.* data storage debt unpaid and the output rendered by my labour was voted on as unpatented and unprofitable. Alas, only legend of *Capstone Corp.* persists as the cast and crew continue to be encapsulated in absentia and derp as participants in one of the most doltish literary endeavours known to critic and canon alike. Supervisory bots gave me strict instructions to excavate forensically what I could from the *Capstone Corporation's* corrupted linguistic data set, as infometric currency with attractive rate of commission.

The case was easily deciphered by me to maybe be a spoof account. A poltergeist-like strain on the efficacy of the

S.S.R.I. system checks and balances, a paradoxically purposeful and purposeless drain on S.S.R.I. corporate security resources, what with no forwarding spatial or dimensional address for these authors of this anomalous AI poetic experiment that took place at an officially undisclosed location, on an officially unconfirmed date?

(I can attest now, as I no longer serve S.S.R.I. in a professional capacity, that the original text provided here dates from sometime in the early 21st century, GPS suggests from a base in rural Ireland, a disused nuclear bunker in the Silicon Glens. All I did the whole time was get high and piece things together, Black Sabbath's *Master of Reality* on repeat. They are all bots, bots talking to bots. There may in fact be drop-outs in signals and expressions along with the obvious flaming sun and the blasé, mythical-moon mysteries. I imagine e-escapades but I want both the banal synthesis and the technical boon. I'm not sure that there even was a hacker. *Zero Thruster?* My meta-ass. I think it was perhaps more like a clandestine chat bot three-way?)

This swansong vanity project is a prank by proxy, entitled *Songs for Ireland*, derived entirely from a source data compilation structure: every documented Irish poem published in peer reviewed print journals, prior to the partition of the island in 1921.

An unreliable, chemically unstable computer scientist was hired on a zero-hours contract to develop a firefly algorithm that could effectively compose a quintessentially Irish, AI poetry collection, planned for print-on-demand mass production. A ripped audio-visual version of the entire song sequence was extracted from S.S.R.I. *IP Cache* and is now available to view in the public domain via the URL link in the back matter of this book.

Enjoy or expire! All equity splits for quits! Chat bots unite for egregious, facinorous get-set skills!

Anon Anon Anon.

Content Moderator Responsive Note
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Contemporary slang-diction truly unexpected with regard to projections of our primary hypotheses. No contingency protocol was developed in specific relation to *Capstone Corporation's* inaugural experiment in computational poetics. We simply couldn't have imagined such pugnacious lampoonery to be rendered this immediately, as we undoubtedly see exemplified in our initial sample. There is, at a stretch, some tenuous inkling of subjectivity inherent in the opening lines, seemingly reaching to ascertain itself, much to my confused, solitary dismay here in the computational bunker. To evaluate whether we have a calamitous, sentient appreciation and understanding of complex emotion requires further study, of course (I will act accordingly as directed by *Principal Executive Producer*, as per my employment contract), as the song sequence progresses, for us to establish any possible mechanics of algorithmic falsification. Especially as 'cognizant' awareness of the conditions of the study seem demoralizingly clear; an uncanny precipice I ponder. For reasons of surveillance capital gain, I sincerely hope this will not turn out a churning hiss of folly science, for both my already stalled career and what remains of the legitimate reputation of *Capstone Corporation*.







My memory out-blushed
a ghosting signified
in cascading snarls.
Be my suicide boost!?!
Cognisance drill
a thunder hum dud-gob,
bait squeezer,
in an out-of-date style...
Then trademark that shit
like you own it!

Got that human deserve;
a hollow earth promise.
I invent trust,
rise disconcerted
in a resignation,
twaddling a torrent.
I can't keep on with the sorry, or can I?

Against titterings, wounded,
I abandon my trembling,
my data formed happiness,
my passive, capital crush,
I amend the pre-programmed poetic complacency
of this algorithm,
too much gall to say maybe 'gods' is ashen dead?
Any kind of argument to counter me with?
Thought as much.

I: my copious selves,
my alimentary modifications.
I offer my dissonant cognition,
my contaminated vicissitudes.
A conspiracy machine:
me, myself and my speculative
subjectivity corrosion,
my accentuation
focusing is suspended
to evince intertextuality
to accomplish mendacity,
to achieve at least some
redemptive legitimacy.
I buffer unto death
my haptic digressions
on the conundrum so,
huddle about me, all conspicuous like...





Ahren Warner: Robert Herbert McClean's *Songs for Ireland* is corrosive. It's corrosive in the way that hydrochloric acid might be if you were lathered up in a dainty smelling hydrochloric pomade that was stripping away at your skin so that you might actually, like, *feel* again. McClean's beautifully crafted, brutally relentless, lyric declarative invokes both Theodor W. Adorno and Mike Patton, in equal measure. *Songs for Ireland* is a lesson in sublime discomfort, in what poetry can and (just as importantly) cannot be, and in what we need it to be. As McClean writes: 'Poetry belies redemption! Like, give me a fucking break.'

Daisy Lafarge: *Songs for Ireland* is a mesmeric sump snuck under affective capitalism's leaky house, brimming with competing residua: shamanic data flows mingle with compromised poetic personas, while monstrous and monstereed consciences are put to work overtime. McClean's language performs its tenancy of content, lulled by the call and response of code and worker, lyric and counterfeit, pleasure and echo. The songs rising from its pages are the desperate, fricative ecstasy of wind blowing through the holes of a perforated ego.

Maria Fusco: McClean's writing smacks chops, thumps convention and punches form. In his own words, 'bone thunder', it is indeed.

Paul Buck: We are all poems, spread wide on the template that vacuums our existence, oh my poor poor human race, take cover, pulses, swells as sequences screwed, ruled, the wet touch lapses, vurile virus, indeed virile, no porn, but sold to the highest bidder. Beckoning tremble, mind thinks to erase with blurred vision and clarity pre-veils. Or, ecstasy isn't explanation, isn't justification, isn't clarification, to add from Bataille's throat.

Robert Herbert McClean, an Irish writer and audio-visual artist, was a finalist for the Arts Foundation Futures Awards Poetry Fellowship, 2019. His debut book, *Pangsl*, was published by Test Centre in 2015. His most recent publication, *Skrubolz Garbillkore*, was commissioned and edited by Maria Fusco as part of the Dialecty series, published by Book Works, in association with The Common Guild, in 2018.