

**An Irishman flies in from New York  
to see *Krapp's Last Tape* and falls asleep  
on someone's shoulder**

Up in the steep dark, body heat gathers,  
the breathing comes less easily. The wait,  
longer than it should be, is long enough  
for a few relentless turns of the spool  
into what was almost silence,  
so that that stranger's lolling head tipping  
yearning into wordless sleep awakens  
tenderness in the shoulder that will soon  
in another several grateful exhalations  
receive its bowing.

The curtain's line floats  
serenely up revealing time unreeling  
on an empty desk, a man costive, creaking, choking –  
and, while bodies high up there in the dark  
begin to remember they cannot bear  
themselves either, mysteriously the  
stranger's head, naked and still flying over  
dazzling arctic wastes, is almost taken  
very tenderly in two hands and kissed.

## In Praise of Salt Water

It's a torment to be close to water, to sweat  
on a path above, unable to reach it.

Everything hurts

especially eyes narrowed against  
this skewering light rejected by

so many surfaces.

Talk dries up and the island's sounds  
depend at first on the scuff of feet and then

the distant knock

of water on rock. No trees, no birds,  
undemanding plants inserted into gaps –

you'd think

there might be a lizard or something akin  
but there's little life here really,

the white stone's

too good at sloughing off  
water and refusing to become earth.

The only thing

is to keep walking, keep looking  
for a way down until one appears

and then descend,

gingerly, slipping on loose stones,  
following or perhaps conjuring a path.

There's nowhere to change

or hide. It's a paradise! Is it? It's an inferno?  
Who cares! Let's take

our clothes off,

slip in by this helpful basin  
offering a weedy lip – and let

the water lift.

We are not all parched  
but some who are can almost feel

their thirst is slaked

by salt water, are comforted by the buoyancy  
and not having to stand up

any more,

sensors flickering to a different definition  
locating limbs in four dimensions

swimming out

## Île Maïre

From the east, that is from land and from the shelter of the creek,  
all you can see  
is shadow, implacable cliff. No landing place,  
no purchase.

The only feet over there are cloven hooves that pick their way  
on narrow tracks round and  
round the enclave, sure and always somewhere they've been before  
and very recently.

The strait is narrow too, an 80-metre invitation  
to conquer something  
despite the signs and sober warnings – *take the currents on! come!*  
*un-isle the isle.*

Professional divers bubble down in pairs to look among the wrecks  
of unlucky ships that took  
their bearings, as they had to, from this uninhabitable rock  
and foundered

and this has been expressed as follows by surface navigators:  
5° 20' 5.12" E, 43° 12' 39.84" N  
though Julius Caesar's mariners wrote on their maps *immadras*,  
that is *mère*, that is Maïre.

## Object Love

Six no seven white pots of divers sizes,  
not so different from each other, one dimpled  
with indeterminate shapes and a little smaller,  
another bigger, flared, fluted – each

exerts or expresses, what is it?  
not so much a pressure as a purity of longing  
for you to need it, love it, become part of it  
and you do, you do. Your heart goes out to them.

And I see they will have to go with you  
everywhere, even unto the claggy grave.  
And here behind the cupboard door  
is the too-big scarified brown pot

you have never found a use for but  
now you hug it to your unmotherly dug  
and weep into it O humble receptacle  
for everything that matters and is holy.

## I must be going

The suitcase was left by the door in such a way  
as it said: I may not stay

It said: the laws of packing are few  
and unnegotiable – first *you*

*trim your need to the space  
available; second you can replace*

*most things; third order  
ensures the flashlight at the border*

*does not pause and return.*  
These laws you must learn.

It said: I am full of the skill or the art  
of the fastened heart,

all the disciplined acts of selection,  
all the folding protection.

It said: I am fear,  
that much is clear

and confessable. I'm the accomplice  
proving the provisional and the final analysis

are one and the same.  
No one's to blame.

## What is really happening

Ships shoulder the quays,  
huge gantries slide  
containers onto silent decks,  
refrigerated trailers gently roar.  
Someone knows where everything should go  
but there's not a person to be seen.  
I am the only soft body here,  
on the margin of what is really happening.  
The ships move like planets in their courses.  
If they make a sound  
it's too low to hear  
and before I know it they have  
already eased away,  
their great screws turning  
somewhere underneath,  
and are becoming smaller,  
leaving me blown about  
by a salty wind, watching the horizon,  
waiting by the indifferent cranes  
for the next slow ship to rise.