

**Invisible Borders**

We drove north from Dublin  
 between stone walls and hedges  
 bound for Bailieborough,  
 down through Greaghnadarragh  
 listening to the Irish language  
 radio station, not understanding  
 a word but loving the sounds.  
 The soft rain glistened on stones  
 and dripped from branches,  
 threatening to turn to ice.  
 On the main street of the village  
 my ancestors called home,  
 half the shops had my name  
 written above the door  
 and half the pubs were closed.  
 We ate lunch in the Bailie Hotel,  
 served massive platefuls  
 and pints by a distant relation.

Late in the afternoon, long past  
 Kingscourt, Carrickmacross,  
 and Kavanagh country,  
 you sat in the passenger seat  
 as we crossed the invisible border,  
 cradling a bottle of Aussie red  
 picked up at a petrol station  
 on the outskirts of Dundalk.  
 We drove through the shadows  
 of the mountains of Mourne  
 down to Warrenpoint, searching  
 for your grandfather's summer  
 home in the gloaming as darkness  
 descended on Carlingford Lough.

After dark, we drove deeper  
 into the north, through  
 Newtownhamilton, Lisnadill  
 and Armagh to Loughall,  
 where an old friend waited  
 with a warm meal and whiskey  
 to guide us safely across borders  
 we could not see, navigating  
 cartography only visible to a local.

Nathanael O'Reilly. Three poems: 'Invisible Borders', 'Remember Armagh' and 'The Hill of Tara' *Transnational Literature* Vol. 4 no. 2, May 2012.  
<http://fhrc.flinders.edu.au/transnational/home.html>

## Remember Armagh

Remember that night in Armagh?  
When the locals in the pub  
Asked where we'd come from?  
Remember the sneer  
In the voice of the sloshed  
Middle-aged regular at the bar –  
*Why would anyone want to go  
To Dublin?* – she slurred, her face  
Turning uglier as she dragged  
Out the final syllables,  
The silence hanging loudly  
At the end of the question  
Implying there was absolutely  
Nothing possibly worth seeing  
Or doing south of the border  
In the *Republic*. We muttered  
Something in a light-hearted  
Tone about relatives, museums  
And pubs, not wanting to stir up  
Any troubles and turned back  
To our mates. Soon signs  
Were made, looks exchanged,  
Pints drained purposefully,  
Coats and hats donned  
As we headed for the door  
In search of a peaceful place  
For a few quiet pints by the fire.

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## The Hill of Tara

Lacking a rag, I tied  
a fresh white handkerchief  
to a tree on the Hill of Tara  
late last December  
and silently thought  
a prayer for my daughter  
taking comfort in a ritual  
that was foreign to me  
but routine for my people  
seeking to connect  
in some small way  
through a simple gesture  
to my ancestors who ruled  
the land spread before me  
all the way to the horizon

*Nathanael O'Reilly*