

You
are
gone
from
me

ՔԱԾՐԱԿՆ ԿԱՆՈՒՄՅԻԱՄ
ԼԿԱՄ ՊԱԸ ՊԱՇԻՆԱ
ՊՃԻՔԵ ՈՒՇ ԱՆ ԲԻԱՐԾ
Sue ՔԱՈՒՐՔՐԻԾ

You
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Padraig Cunningham
Liam Mac Mathúna
Máire Nic an Bhairn
Sue Rafterford

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'Douglas Hyde (1860-1949) – Cultural Influencer'.

TO MY
MOUTH

Sue Rainsford

His mouth to my mouth. A bhéal go dtí mo bhéal.

Pressed thus close and still—words trickle out.
Smear of vowel and consonant down my shirtfront and
onto his chest where it sits bare.

His mouth to my mouth. A bhéal go dtí mo bhéal.

A quartet of lips shut like a door not quite flush in its frame and
the draught coming through where the wood is warped makes a
high, high sound.

His mouth to my mouth. A bhéal go dtí mo bhéal.

Pursed into a quivering O where this grief-struck chord
reverbs in an ever-replenishing echo.

His mouth to my mouth. A bhéal go dtí mo bhéal.

What is a kiss, if not a porous seal in which a man mistakes the
pulse of another for a pour of his own loud, thrumming blood?

His mouth: a bhéal.

His mouth: a tunnel for song-flecked air.

His mouth: to my mouth.

A bhéal: a vale which, come spring, will rush with
the beginnings of a river.

A bhéal: a veil stirred by a ceaseless chant that, even now,
is sloughing itself from the depths of a singing chest.

Gerry Bohan is a farmer just outside Mohill, Co. Leitrim. He tells of how he upholds the yearly family tradition to fling the 'clainings' from a heifer after giving birth into a specific hawthorn tree. The afterbirth is left to hang in the tree as an offering and to bring good fortune to the animal.





Micheál Mahon's homeplace is across the road at the entrance to Hyde's house 'Ratra' in Roscommon. He knows of three locations where Biddy Crummy once lived; one on the side of the Ballaghaderreen bypass, another on the edge of the flowering bog, and lastly the small house Hyde helped build in order to move her from the very poor conditions at the bog.

Love's Lament and Welcoming the Dawn Chorus

Biddy Crummy, a Woman at
One with Life and Nature

Liam Mac Mathúna
& Máire Nic an Bhaird

As a boy, Douglas Hyde spent many hours a day at his books and relaxed afterwards by hunting small birds on the fields and boglands around the Glebe House in Tibohine. He had a deep liking for spending time with others and frequently involved himself in friendly discussions with his neighbours. In 1874, he embarked on a journey to learn the Irish language from some of the locals. Over time, he took up the practice of recording the songs and stories they shared. He was only seventeen when he collected one of his most famous love-songs, *Mo Bhrón ar an bhFairrge / My Grief on the Sea*, from Bríd Ní Chromaigh, Bidy Crummy of Tibohine in December 1877.

We learn of Bidy Crummy's circumstances from Hyde's account of how he obtained another of the many love songs he collected. In this, a girl sings of the despair and sadness that took hold of her when she found herself living among her husband's people, far from her home and friends, amid strange faces and strange surroundings. It was all very different from the delightful home of her youth in Dúiche Uí Bhriain (O'Brien's county), which she depicts as follows:

Bíonn an gandal ann 's an bardal,
Bíonn ál ag an lachain ann
Searrach ag an láir ann,
 Agus leanbh ag an mnaoi.
Na bric ag éirí in airde,
'S an abhainn dul le fáinní,
'S nach cumhra an áit í,
 Bheith i ndúiche Uí Bhriain.

There the drake is and the gander,
There the duck and ducklings wander,
There the mare has got her foal,
 And there the woman has her child.
There the river's swiftly sweeping,
There the speckled trout is leaping,
In O'Brien's pleasant country,
 All so green, and fair, and mild.

Hyde describes the lasting impact which the song and the singer had on him:

I shall not easily forget the old lady from whom I rescued this song with extreme difficulty. She was clothed in rags and shrivelled with smoke and age like a mummy. She appeared to be nearly a hundred years old, and lived with her daughter, who seemed nearly as old as herself, in a little hut of one room built of sods in the middle of a wet bog, with a hole in the roof for a chimney. When she came to a place in the song where the girl describes her new house on the mountain as a

*Botháinín gan fónamh
Ag bagairt orm i gcónaí
Gan aon ghreim beo ann
Ach an frap atá faoi.*

i.e. "an unprofitable little hut, ever threatening to fall in on me, without a single holdfast in it, but the prop that is supporting it," she shook with amusement till the tears came into her eyes, and stopped to assure me with bursts of jerky asthmatic laughter, in which her daughter joined, that the girl's house was just like her own. Poor old lady! It was no wonder that the song appealed to her. I found out afterwards that the girl's fate had been her own.'

This account is significant at two levels. Firstly, it is noteworthy that the singer, who was in fact Biddu Crummy, explicitly drew a parallel between her own life story and that of the girl in the song. Secondly, and even more remarkably, she was able to rise above the misery of her own sorry plight and enjoy the irony of the contrast between her married circumstances and the abode of her youth.

It was also from Biddu Crummy that Hyde gathered two other pieces, which were among the most moving and beautiful he ever collected. Each has enjoyed a long afterlife. *Mo Bhrón ar an bhFairrge / My Grief on the Sea* was included by Hyde in his most celebrated book, *Love Songs of Connacht* (1893). This song became an immediate favourite, and appeared in anthologies of poetry from 1895 on. Here is Biddu Crummy's original version in Irish together with Hyde's felicitous English verse translation:

Mo bhrón ar an bhfairge!
Is é tá mór!
Is é gabhail idir mé
’S mo mhíle stór;

D’fhágadh ’san mbaile mé
Déanamh bróin,
Gan aon tsúil thar sáile liom
Choíche ná go deo.

Mo léan nach bhfuil mise
’Gus mo mhuirín bhán
I gCúige Laighean
Nó i gcontae an Chláir.

Mo bhrón nach bhfuil mise
’Gus mo mhíle grá
Ar bord loinge
Triall go Meiriceá.

Leaba luachra
Bhí fúm aréir,
Agus chaith mé amach é
Le teas an lae.

Tháinig mo ghrása
Le mo thaobh
Guala ar ghualainn
Agus béal ar bhéal.

My grief on the sea,
How the waves of it roll!
For they heave between me
And the love of my soul!

Abandoned, forsaken,
To grief and to care,
Will the sea ever waken
Relief from despair?

My grief and my trouble!
Would he and I were
In the province of Leinster,
Or county of Clare.

Were I and my darling –
Oh, heart-bitter wound! –
On board of the ship
For America bound.

On a green bed of rushes
All night I lay,
And I flung it abroad
With the heat of the day.

And my love came behind me –
He came from the South;
His breast to my bosom,
His mouth to my mouth.

Hyde included another piece from Bidy Crummy, *Paidrín Cumhra / A Fragrant Prayer*, in his *Religious Songs of Connacht* (1906). This was ‘a verse to be said when one is awakened by the chirping of the birds in the morning’. This short piece quickly won favour, too. Padraic Colum chose it to open his *Anthology of Irish Verse* (1922). Here is the original, alongside Hyde’s fine translation, again in verse.

Paidrín cumhra mhúin
 Mo leanbh dom féin
 Gan mo shúil do bheith dúnta
 In aimsir screadta na n-éan,
 Ag dul ar mo ghlúnaibh, ag guí
 ‘S ag agairt Mic Dé
 Cuimhniú ar an Uan atá brúite
 Marbh faoin geré.

A fragrant prayer upon the air
 My child taught me,
 Awaken there, the morn is fair,
 The birds sing free.
 Now dawns the day, awake and pray
 And bend the knee,
 The Lamb who lay beneath the clay
 Was slain for thee.

As Hyde was instrumental both in preserving Irish folklore and transmitting it in English, a word about his use of language may be noted. When he started to keep a diary in Irish in 1874 at just fourteen years of age, Hyde created his own system of spelling, as he had never seen the language written down. A vocabulary list at the back of his diary for 1874–6 shows his approach, which was based on English:

Sideyour	=	soldier	(saighdiúir)
Bolla more	=	town	(baile mór)
Spidyoge	=	a robin	(spideog)
Gloná	=	a glass	(gloine)
Feona	=	wine	(fíona)
Gauryee	=	laughing	(gáirí)
Gunweal	=	soon	(gan mhoill)
Cwehne	=	caoineadh	(cry)

Hyde published *Beside the Fire*, an important bilingual collection of folktales, in 1890. In his preface he observes that translation is difficult as Irish and English are opposed to each other in spirit and idiom. Rather than use standard English, he opted for the form of the English language then spoken by most of the people of the West of Ireland, which was heavily influenced by Irish. However, he tells his readers that he decided to choose only from those idioms which had already gained currency. He avoided new word-for-word translations, which would be his own personal creations, as the result would be too literal and merely picturesque.

However, there was a middle way for a man who was himself a poet with a creative mind. When editing and translating *Love Songs of Connacht*, Hyde gave himself greater scope, without explicitly advertent to the fact. Rather than restrict himself to words and phrases from the Irish which were already in circulation and run the risk of clichés and the commonplace, or opt for bizarre and eccentric word-for-word translations, he used the Irish phrases as a linguistic catalyst, enabling him to inject freshness into his new English versions. In the case of *Mo Bhrón ar an bhFairrge / My Grief on the Sea*, it was Hyde's verse translation which won acclaim. However, he was generally more successful in his prose renderings, where he was free of metrical constraints. A good example of this is his moving literal translation of a verse from *A Ógánaigh an Chúil Cheangailte / Ringleted Youth of my Love*:

Is shaoil mé a stóirín
Go mba gealach agus grian thú,
Is shaoil mé 'na dhiaidh sin
Go mba sneachta ar an tsiabh thú,
Is shaoil mé 'na dhiaidh sin
Go mba lóchrann ó Dhia thú,
Nó gurab tú an réalt eolais
Ag dul romham is mo dhiaidh thú.

And I thought, my storeen,
That you were the sun and the moon,
And I thought after that,
That you were snow on the mountain,
And I thought after that
That you were a lamp from God,
Or that you were the star of knowledge
Going before me and after me.

Biddy Crummy's two core pieces – the one a love lament across the ocean to America, the other a celebration of each day's dawning – show how she was able to rise above her own impoverished circumstances and draw strength and resolve from the wider physical and spiritual environment of north-west Roscommon.

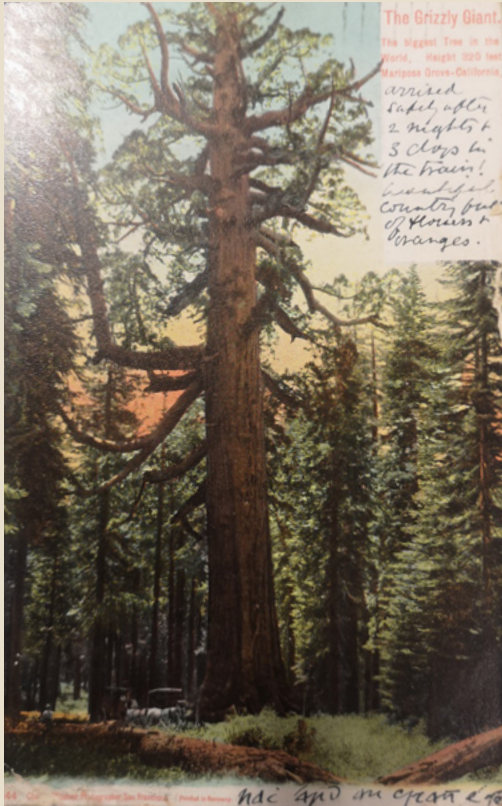
Liam Mac Mathúna & Máire Nic an Bhaird



Ruth Clinton, Tara Baath Mooney, Fionnuala Maxwell and Aoife Hamman rerecorded a caoineadh by singer Citi Ní Ghallchóir (Kitty Gallagher). The original recording was made by anthropologist Alan Lomax in Donegal in 1951.



John Fuery pulled the tarp off a clinker boat that has belonged to his family for over one hundred and fifty years. It lies in the shed of his uncle Jimmy Fuery, a craftsman and boat builder who feature in the RTE 'Hands' series. Douglas Hyde was a keen fisherman and loved nothing more than to be out on Lough Gara which is just a short distance from Ratra House in Roscommon.



Douglas Hyde was an avid letter writer and was in constant public and private communication, including sending numerous postcards to his children on the eight month Gaelic League fund raising trip to America. Hyde took this role seriously, engaging with all stratas of American society, in one of his many lectures he started with; "I am here today to explain to you the life and death struggles upon which we are engaged in Ireland".

'The Grizzly Giant' postcard was sent by Lucy Hyde to her younger daughter, Úna. The Irish was added by Douglas Hyde reads: 'Nach árd an crann é se[o]?' (Isn't this a tall tree).

Image courtesy of the Aidan Heavey Collection, Athlone (Westmeath Libraries).



Ash dieback is a serious fungal disease that originated in Asia but is now widespread in Europe, it has a high mortality rate, particularly with younger ash trees. This ash tree is in Mohill, on the land that would of once belonged to Douglas Hyde's grandfather.

Remain

Padraig Cunningham

The corncrake, a lapwing, snipe and grouse.
Partridge, grey plover, a rook and blackbird about.
Waterhen, a mallard, the crane and curlew.
A bald coot and pigeon fall from the sky:
 what is slain will rise again,
 what is beneath the soil to see?

A grey barrel, the powder—a pinch and bloom,
mingling smoke and breath speaks to Jupiter.
Driver drove on, tongue hell bent on quarry.
A stag falls on iced earth,
 pink tenderils fracture, frosted guts.
Flagellation.

An ember burns.
A blackened stick can write a name.
 Remain.

The child's hand drops a stone into the well,
 a word falls, dispersing a dream.
Wren whisper, synrix twists to a memory.
What new region to wander in?

She waited by the door,
 to catch an ear.
Sphagnum stretches the sun as umber pools ferment.
An ocean's journey a step away.
Grief lays the farside of the story.
But, for now,
 a branch is enough.

Padraig Cunningham is an artist and designer living in Roscommon, his work examines physical displacement in the environment. Within this dislocation, themes of loss and absence become apparent often centering on everyday places, their reinventing and questioning their status, usage, and how they have been altered to accommodate human engagement.

Liam Mac Mathúna is Professor Emeritus of Irish at University College Dublin. He is collaborating with Dr Máire Nic an Bhaird on research into the life and work of Dr Douglas Hyde. Liam and Máire have co-edited *Douglas Hyde: Irish Ideology and International Impact* (NUI, 2023) and *Douglas Hyde: My American Journey* (with others, UCD Press, 2019). Liam is also doing research on Seán Ó Neachtain, scholar and scribe, from Drum, Co. Roscommon (c. 1647-1729).

Máire Nic an Bhaird is a lecturer in Maynooth University. Her areas of teaching and research include the life and work of Douglas Hyde, Ireland's first President, Censorship of Irish Language Literature (1920-1960), Children's Literature in the Irish Language, Education for the Science-Society nexus and History of Education. Máire is leading Maynooth University's central role in the €2 million Horizon Europe BioBeo project. Máire is working with Professor Liam Mac Mathúna on the life and work of Douglas Hyde, with the first volume to be published in 2024.

Sue Rainsford is the author of two novels, *Follow Me To Ground* and *Redder Days*. She has been awarded residencies by the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Maynooth University and University College Dublin, and she is a recipient of the Arts Council Literature Bursary Award, the VAI/DCC Art Writing Award, a MacDowell Fellowship and Le Prix Imaginales.

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An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir,
Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán
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