

Modern Old Nuns

After all the years of veil and wimple,
Of long frocks and rattling rosaries,
They go to the hairdresser's now
And dress in skirts and cardigans.

(A few
Rouge their fading cheeks,
Tint faintly their lips,
Dye hair a manic red.)

Nobody is beating any more at their doors,
For entry;
Inch by inch, they yield
The last of the ground of their glory.

But oh how they dance still
In their hearts,
Merrily still
Build the hidden kingdom!

Trinity

The sea by itself is water merely:
Its miracle is in its beating against the shore,
Spreading out across flat sands,

Shifting shingle and stone,
Flowing over piers and jetties,
Halting before rock

And falling backward on itself to try again,
Leaping high in the storm,
Quietly attacking the very base of land.

And God and God and God are love merely
Until they find foolish us
To take love's overflow.

When I Think of Bridgid

For Rita Minehan

I think of milk and the slosh of milk between buckets,
Of milk churned quietly into butter ,
Of generous milk poured for the wayfarer;

I think of oatcakes and griddlecakes readied for the stranger;
I think of oakgroves
And a chapel rising from the forest;

I think of green rushes plaited into crosses,
Of fragrant turf and a fire kept long burning,
A sword melted and its opals sold to feed the hungry;

I think of generations looking upward from their troubles
And a sheltering cloak spread warmly over the world.