

Swan-plucked, scoop-cut, shoulder-shaped and nibbed
I, quill of Colmcille, am dipped in iron-gall ink
and scraped across vellum, calf-dropped
Columcille, thin frame clothed in rough spun robes,
Grips me between thumb and index
Breath coming and going with each rhythmic scrape,
and sputter of candle
Among quires of vellum, folio counts, quill trimming.
Where we await dawn's cold light

The light that shone on the plain at Drumcliff is the same light that shines today.
The same dawn, the same dusk, the same shadows cast. Nothing changes.
Sun rises, sun sets, sun rises.
Curved light stretching east to west, past to present, making a copy of each day.
But there are minor changes, minor errors in the printing.
There are missing letters, re-configured words.
It could be that the sun rises on an incorrect number of grass blades under Benbulbin's
sombre shadow, an inaccurate recollection of guilt, barely noticeable.

You find them
under the hips of the hills,
in the lull between earthwaves,
as again they rise
from the shyness of near dark
part miracle part living flame.

Cupped faces so grave
their purple deep eye-pupil stare me down,
A flutter of small wings
at the threshold of *Bealtaine's* door.

I feel time unravel, a moment, a thousand years
the centuries are writing out their past
full of the old language
at the point from which
the shadows draw back

All grief traced through them
the culmination of all that has been absorbed
the blood of their making and unmaking
trampled into the landscape