

The Party Line

Ciara Ní É

I'm hobnobbing at a magazine launch
Hitting it off with an intellectual glamazon
Who's calling my performance sensational
I also write in Irish, I explain

Confusion clouds her eyes
And even her carefully worded reply
Does not hide their opinion:
That the language is below my station

Later when her husband grunts hello
And crams a sweaty palm in mine
I take him in, head to toe
And I'm reminded that often love is blind

Black Sheep

"I was the the black sheep in my house"
That's my regular response
to people's surprise
That I wasn't raised with Irish
I did not attend a Gaelscoil
And I don't play the fiddle
My upbringing provides no simple link
For them to rationalise my interest in Irish

The question that follows is
"Why do you speak it?"
I checked and there's
No line in the sand where this began
Way leads on to way
Day follows night follows day
And you wake up one morning, changed

"Why?"
A thousand faint decisions
Amongst the mess of millions
That direct this lifelong production

That's what has me in this guise
The Gaeilgeoir poet in front of you tonight
Chewing sloppily on the question
"Why?"

I've no excuse
And none is due

But in response,
here's a question of my own
Are you actually asking why I speak Irish
Or why you don't?

Excuses

People say

“We’d love to speak Irish, but...”

They place the blame on

Bad teachers, the *Modh Coinníollach*, the *Tuiseal Ginideach*

That said, they want their children to learn

They wave them off to *Gaelscoileanna*

and after years in immersion, the kids leave, *líofa*

Saying

“We’d love to speak Irish, but...”

They place the blame on

Lack of opportunities, lack of understanding, lack of use

That said, you can be sure

In our next census

that millions will claim to use Irish every day

A national spoof!

A lie, hiding the truth

That “We’d love to speak Irish”