

Title: Fatherhood in Contemporary Irish Poetry

Abstract: In fiction, on the stage and onscreen, the Irish father has typically been portrayed as altogether absent, emotionally absent, or drunkenly and all-too-violently present; James Joyce's Leopold Bloom and Roddy Doyle's Jimmy Rabbitte Sr. require mention here precisely because they throw this stereotype into relief. In poetry, the trend has been different. Poems about fathers are remarkably often elegiac. They are poems written by sons for sick, dying or dead fathers – a phenomenon in line with the Anglo-American tradition generally, as Peter Middleton describes in *Subverting Masculinity*. Whereas poems by mothers about motherhood are common, what's lacking is a poetics of fatherhood: poems about being fathers, from the point of view of fathers fully alive and engaged in the task.

In this presentation I'll discuss some major exceptions. Paul Muldoon's rewriting of W.B. Yeats's "Prayer for my Daughter" pitches an acceptance of helplessness against Yeats's attempt to control his daughter's future, paradoxically in a poem that showcases Muldoon's own virtuoso linguistic control. Meanwhile, work by Peter Sirr and Justin Quinn takes on fatherhood in the context of a postmodern urban landscape that threatens to overwhelm. In each case, formal strategies peculiar to lyric – a genre which, in the Irish tradition, has been bound up with individual mastery and control of a craft – become a means to consider the individual's ceding of control in a globalized world.

Bio: Ailbhe Darcy is a doctoral candidate in English at the University of Notre Dame with a focus on contemporary poetry and lyric theory. She has a BA in English and French and an MSc in development studies from University College, Dublin as well as an MA in publishing from University of the Arts, London. Her first collection of poetry, *Imaginary Menagerie* (Bloodaxe 2011), was shortlisted for a Strong Award and a poem from it was featured as the Guardian Poem of the Week.