

# EAMON AT 80

*Celebrating Eamon Grennan*

*Edited by Peter Fallon*



Gallery Books

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MARGARET GIBSON

*Sweet Rain*

Not quite awake, dozy in the way bees are  
after fumbling the lilies,  
and just loud enough for me to hear,  
you say, 'It's raining.' And because  
I used to love the sound of the rain,  
I drift back into remembering what,  
hard of hearing, I can no longer hear,  
wanting to start the day alive to  
*the small rain down can rain*  
that shimmers in the window screens  
and streaks tree trunks lichen-green,  
then misty as the morning  
clears. Closing my eyes, I've listened  
to the rain on the roof for years,  
as if my hearing it would always be  
continuous, rain falling on stones,  
on nests and wetlands, on bogs,  
ponds, and nurse-logs; rain  
licking the coyote's fur and the silky  
trillium, rain-stippled, nodding  
on the shaded slope west of the house.  
Beyond the window spatter now  
I watch the cloudy borders of this quiet  
storm, grateful for our life together  
in the no-sound of the rain —  
where it is nearly possible to believe  
that we ourselves will continue,  
and the Earth will, long after  
it falls to one of us to close the other's eyes.

VONA GROARKE

*The Copybook*

We learned to write in Aisling copybooks,  
salmon pink or mossy green, with either a fountain pen  
on the front cover, or a round tower over which  
a single swallow was caught in the act of circling or alighting,  
who could tell, perched in its green sky, in its black outline,  
above the tower, which was also black, and gave no hint  
of the stowed gold or frightened monks inside.

One was ruled, the other not. One was for Irish,  
English, History and Geography; the other, sums,  
though that's where I put the poems, of course,  
small poems with red titles in the taut blue grid,  
like a page of slit windows, crossed with iron bars.

MICHELLE O'SULLIVAN

*Then the Hare*

I walked the field again  
half-rounding its hill  
a slow rise of a climb  
downing to the riverline

I wanted to see again  
that heron, then the hare —  
the way it happened when  
you were last here

I'd pointed at the same  
time you'd said look.

Quieted, as if trying to figure  
or refigure a tune, I knew  
it wasn't what was here  
but what was left.

CATHERINE STAPLES

*Singer in the Trees*

*for Eamon Grennan*

A high whistle in clear air if ever a river  
could whistle so purely. Here on the Chanticleer  
hillside where the only water in sight is mostly  
still and carp rise opened-mouthed, unhearable.  
You halt for a beat — hear the oriole before you  
see her. White oak, peak of the hill, sovereign gaze  
over three ponds. Quick as light, your eye untangles  
the dun from new green leaves, the joist where  
her nest swings like a fattened sock left out on the line.  
And, ever after, I knew April in a new way  
as the two-note liquid query of a Baltimore oriole,  
her orange flames going tree to tree in the canopy.

You in the garden-gallery anywhere with pencil  
and palm notebook, eyes dark as a hare's with staring  
in an alcove of Bonnards, on a hillside finding  
the mare as she tips her head to the foal — breathes.  
Always, the fluent return to wit and conversation.  
Once when rain pocked waves sky met sea  
and husbands stood lookout as wives swam  
in next to nothing, in the dawn cold rain, Glassilaun.  
Whiskey, sweet-talk, laughter in the pub where fire  
warmed the four of us and your poem hangs on the wall —  
like a painting changing the light in the room,  
like your daughter's print on our guest room wall:  
small blue window lifting a sash in the dark wood.  
Is it any wonder that the once-upon-a-time child  
doing arabesques in your kitchen, singing, whirling  
as she went — should make her way in indigos, cobalt,  
scrum of bees, striated blues and blacks of mussel shells.  
She like you, Eamon, resurrecting Eden from plain air  
making a still-life hum and gust in slams of wind.