“Hope” is the thing with feathers

EMILY DICKINSON

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I’ve heard it in the chilliest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet, never, in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of Me.

From The Poems Of Emily Dickinson,
The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1951

In celebration of Poetry Day 2016, Soul Food is intended for distribution throughout hospitals and healthcare settings in Ireland. The poetry is a selection from the Poems for Patience series in Galway University Hospitals and edited by Colette Bryce.

Menu of Poems is a joint initiative between Arts for Health Partnership Programme, West Cork; Arts in Health at Cork University Hospital; Arts Initiative in Mental Health Sligo Leitrim; Galway, Mayo Roscommon Community Health Office; Galway University Hospitals Arts Trust and Saolta Health Care Group; Kildare County Council Arts and Health Programme; Naas General Hospital Arts Committee; National Centre for Arts and Health, Tallaght; South Tipperary General Hospital; South Tipperary Mental Health Services; St. Luke’s General Hospital, Kilkenny; St. Luke’s Hospital, Dublin; University Limerick Hospitals Group; Waterford Healing Arts Trust; West Cork Mental Health Services Arts and Health Programme and Wexford General Hospital.

‘Menu of Poems’ is a project of Arts and Health Co-ordinators Ireland, managed by Galway University Hospitals Arts Trust and kindly supported by the Health Service Executive and Poetry Ireland.

To download a copy go to: www.artsandhealth.ie Please email your comments to: guhartstrust@hse.ie

Soul Food

MENU OF POEMS 2016

In celebration of Poetry Day Ireland

28 April 2016
Soul Food

People often turn to poetry at times of illness, loss or recovery, even people who have little time for it in their day-to-day lives. Poetry seems to help, by filling our minds with unexpected images, by inviting us into a reflective space where words can offer some spiritual sustenance. Poetry – I’ll even dare to say – can reach the parts that food cannot! We offer this menu of poems to you, on Poetry Day Ireland, for nourishment of another sort. We hope you enjoy them.

COLETTE BRYCE, EDITOR

Lying in Wait for Happiness

YEHUDA AMICHAI
Translated by Glenda Abramson & Tudor Parfitt

On the broad steps leading down to the Western Wall
A beautiful woman came up to me: You don’t remember me,
I’m Shoshana in Hebrew. Something else in other languages.
All is vanity.

Thus she spoke at twilight standing between the destroyed
And the built, between the light and the dark.
Black birds and white birds changed places
With the great rhythm of breathing,
The flash of tourists’ cameras lit my memory too:
What are you doing here between the promised and the forgotten,
Between the hoped for and the imagined?
What are you doing here lying in wait for happiness
With your lovely face a tourist advertisement from God
And your soul rent and torn like mine?

She answered me: My soul is rent and torn like yours
But it is beautiful because of that
Like fine lace.

From Poems of Jerusalem and Love Poems,
The Sheep Meadow Press, 1981

From the Irish

IAN DUHIG

According to Dineen, a Gael unsurpassed in lexicographical enterprise, the Irish for moon means ‘the white circle in a slice of half-boiled potato or turnip’. A star is the mark on the forehead of a beast and the sun is the bottom of a lake, or well.

Well, if I say to you your face
is like a slice of half-boiled turnip,
your hair is the colour of a lake’s bottom
and at the centre of each of your eyes
is the mark of the beast, it is because
I want to love you properly, according to Dineen.

‘From the Irish’ by kind permission of the author

Theory Of Memory

LOUISE GLÜCK

Long, long ago, before I was a tormented artist, afflicted with longing yet incapable of forming durable attachments, long before this, I was a glorious ruler uniting all of a divided country — so I was told by the fortune-teller who examined my palm. Great things, she said, are ahead of you, or perhaps behind you; it is difficult to be sure. And yet, she added, what is the difference?
Right now you are a child holding hands with a fortune-teller. All the rest is hypothesis and dream.

From Faithful and Virtuous Night, Carcanet, 2014