

Relics

Bronwyn Mahon

I do not remember church as a child
I remember church a few years ago
Everybody else had religion
I spun out, glad I didn't
You were always, always on my mind
Our Father

So lost without reason, so broken in
The pattern of my mind changed
I kneeled with the rest
A face appeared on the back of the pew
Etched in me with dark oak
I don't even want to see anymore
Who art in heaven

I couldn't stay crumpled forever
Pain shot up my knees as I stood
The whole assembly heard me cry out
No sound left my lips
The walls began to move, you were pushing them in on me
Your face appeared in colored glass
Hallowed be thy name

I chewed the nail polish off my left thumb
Thy kingdom come

Maybe now I have dreamed you
That night on that bed
Cloaked in Inverness

Thought you up and made you whole
In that bed, that night
While New York was born
And the city ate up one more
Twisted you from me and me from you
Thy will be done

You're no different from the one before,
Maybe just the same
The one whose face was on the pew
Fascinated by my ankle
He said I was perfect there
On earth as it is in heaven

The one before winced when he was touched
Like bandaging a wound
But he tried to fold up like me
Still another said,
"Do you remember that night when I was pissed?"
Give us this day our daily bread

I kneeled again
He was back etched in oak
Why do you keep coming?
Standing at the counter with your bag and your coffee
This was my cue, and I ducked
And forgive us our trespasses

Stop pulling out my eyelashes
I can't help if I scream when I stand
I will try to be more interested in my purple suede boots
Go straight left straight right
We couldn't see a thing in the mist
It is an angle I can no longer look at school from

Now we could sit again
As we forgive those who trespass against us

I watched him stock the stacks
I watched you play guitar
I watched you lost in your hometown
He was like Latin—early, root, extinct
At my table, I freaked
Why did he appear now
And lead us not into temptation

I was a girl to changed to fit my own soul
Crushed corona bottle caps in a beach parking lot
My mind wanders; your rain check was my favorite
Did you stop talking when I cut my hair?
Standing for the last time
No pain
But deliver us from evil

I lost my center in Ireland,
That night you were pissed
And forgot my boots
Remember my red shoes
They went with my newly shorn self
She said it was sex hair
You agreed, would you always
Amen