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## GROWING UP ITALIAN

### *1. The Godfather*

His necessity is always waiting  
grim compadre, *gumbaa*,  
frowning at the font—

“Who is this infant  
worth owning or belonging?  
Even the clock  
can tell a better story,  
lewd drip of the clepsydra.  
It was a woman brought  
us both here, woman  
of whom it is not right to speak,  
girl around the corner, mother of God.”

## ***2. The Lesson***

**A child is mostly about miracles—  
laws kick in only later  
when gravity happens  
and the eagle that snatches you  
from your cradle  
soon has to let you fall.**

### ***3. Right Food***

**Or salt anchovies and gold sultanas**

**lank tresses of whole basil**

**onion'd through with oil**

**just enough to coat**

**each shank of the pasta**

**accurate *secco* succulence**

**with no gaudy sauce**

**for the Americans, no red slop.**

**11 January 2013**

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**Night. When the world  
walks away from the window  
and you're alone  
inside yourself.**

**The houses we build  
are meant as outer signs  
of an inward seclusion,  
to be yourself inside.**

**11 January 2013**

**(GROWING UP ITALIAN)**

***4. The Catechism Lesson***

**Where is Adam buried?**

**In my testicles.**

**And where is Eve?**

**Among your ovaries.**

**11 January 2013**

## *5. La Chiesa*

**And the church walls  
painted to look like marble  
green snaky feints through travertine  
o I knew the words already  
so felt the sleek shock of fake.  
But other colors were truthing me,  
stations of the cross Christ Falls  
A Second Time the organ played  
while we filed up for communion  
so many of us young and old to  
kneel at the rail and elbow up again  
while the organist carried on Mascagni  
that famous intermezzo between  
the lovers and the murder. And who  
was Santa Fotunata anyhow?**

**12 January 2013**

## **6. *La Festa***

**Girls in eggshell satin blouses  
boys in white long-sleeve shirts  
we smelled different too.  
We were carrying a message  
we didn't understand  
most of us would spend  
our whole lives deciphering.**

**12 January 2013**



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**Caught in blue ink  
a snowdrift with  
two deer in it  
nuzzling down for corn.**

**12 January 2013**

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**My eyes are going  
the light while it lasts  
belongs to me.**

**12.I.13**

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**So little to say  
this sick day**

**they call it that**

**nothing wrong with  
the day though**

**except maybe the dark.**

**12.I.13**

## **ON THE PUSZTA**

**Berlioz put his Faust to start with  
on the endless Hugarian plain  
because a man all alone on the grasslands  
is the bravest challenge to the world.  
Suppose it to be a devil. Suppose he has  
a host of devils speaking their own  
devilish language that looks like Basque.  
And there the poor tenor stands  
through his whole life, everything  
that he does or happens at him is  
no better than a dream. Still  
he's a hero. Aloneness his virtù,**

**12 January 2013**

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**Footsteps in the attic  
if only I could be sure  
whose they are  
who is walking  
the road over my house.**

**12 January 2013**

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**So much guesswork to be done.  
Do you miss the flowers  
when you're indoors, do you  
miss the Turkish carpet  
when you're walking on the lawn?  
You are the one we've been looking for,  
a priest itching to believe in some strange god.**

**12 January 2013**

## **IRISH STUDIES**

**1.**

**Coming back to life  
after a long day sick  
ten hours sleep, sleep  
the Irish penicillin.  
For we are a dream people  
and our strength is from  
that somber landscape  
shot through with such light,  
our native country.  
The woman in black  
stood close beside me  
she moved inside me,  
a sudden healing  
goddess from our nether world.**

**2.**

**Irish folk beware:  
I learn these things  
from dream and family  
not from books.**

**Not from those pretending  
out liud to be one of our kind.**

**3.**

**Ireland is January  
Celts always at the extremes  
the greenest meadows barrenest hills.  
Erigal, mountain  
where my mind's at home.**

**13 January 2013**



## **AD POETAM**

**Now ask yourself  
who wants to hear  
such music as you make?  
Isn't it all convention,  
imposition? Are you  
giving them pleasure  
or sucking their blood?**

**13 January 2013**

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**Tyranny of name—  
the part of you  
can be unscrewed  
and some other  
one screwed on  
et tout va bien?**

**I wish it were so.  
A name is part of your meat.**

**13 January 2013**

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**Quiet excitement of beginning again—  
but my handwriting looks the same,  
so who am I fooling?**

**You, if I'm lucky,  
and you'll forgive me all the strange  
roads brought me to you.**

**13 January 2013**

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**Breath not back yet.  
Everything short.  
Bach's first English  
Suite seems just  
slow enough for me  
to climb aboard or  
at least count the  
freight cars as they pass.**

**13 January 2013**