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Postgrad

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The lake decided against wearing metaphor;  
like me, it decided to simply bounce the sun.  
A tourist here, I sit among these rising futures,  
their speech—leafy laughter, without the hooks  
catching my vowels, tearing my words.

They pull together in groups of three or four,  
attracted by what echoes. I feel most for the ones  
sitting alone, a paperback of Byron's poems  
hidden in plain sight, desperate to appear mysterious.

Collecting my worn-out coat, my satchel,  
I prepare for the long road home. Dutifully,  
I'll return to my roles—father, husband, son—  
unable to resist symbolizing something.

I walk away, but like Lot's wife,  
I turn for one last look at them.  
A passing student also turns,  
curious to see what I see.

\*

last night

I couldn't

remember my age

feverishly

I pieced together

the evidence

flapping around me

like starving pigeons

and concluded

I must be fourteen

relieved

I smugly

congratulated myself

and ran skipping

towards

my singing future

but even

drowning in sleep

I couldn't quite

believe it

and woke

to find

the internet

tumbling

out of my mouth

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Darren Donohue's poetry has appeared in *Poety Ireland Review*, *Cyphers*, *Honest Ulsterman*, *Storms Journal*, *The Blue Nib*, *Irish Times*, the *Sunday Independent*, and many other journals and newspapers. He received the Dennis O'Driscoll Literary Award in 2020 and has been writer-in-residence at Carlow College, St. Patrick's, and Trinity College, Dublin.