



## Durcan – Highlighted Quotes from 'Windfall', 8 Parnell Hill, Cork

But, then, at the end of day I could always say –

Well, now, I am going home.

I felt elected, steeped, sovereign to be able to say –

I am going home.

When I was at home I liked to stay at home;

At home I stayed at home for weeks;

At home I used to sit in a winged chair by the window

Overlooking the river and the factory chimneys,

The electricity power station and the car assembly works.

The fleets of trawlers and the pilot tugs,

Dreaming that life is a dream which is real,

The river a reflection of itself in its own waters

Goya sketching Goya among the smoky mirrors.

The industrial vista was my Mont Sainte-Victoire.

While my children sat on my knees watching TV

Their mother, my wife, reclined on the couch

Knitting a bright-coloured scarf, drinking a cup of black coffee,

Smoking a cigarette – one of her own roll-ups.

I closed my eyes and breathed in and breathed out.

It is ecstasy to breathe if you are at home in the world.

What a windfall! A home of our own!

Our neighbours' houses had names like 'Con Amore',

'Sans Souci', 'Pacelli', 'Montini', 'Homesville'.

But we called our home 'Windfall'.

‘Windfall’, 8 Parnell Hill, Cork.

In the gut of my head coursed the leaf of tranquillity

Which I dreamed was known only to Buddhist Monks

In lotus monasteries high up in the Hindu Kush.

Down here in the dark depths of Ireland,

Below sea level in the city of Cork,

In a city as intimate and homicidal as a Little Marseilles,

In a country where all the children of the nation

Are not cherished equally

And where the best go homeless, while the worst

Erect block-house palaces – self-regardingly ugly–

Having a little home of your own can give to a family

A chance in a lifetime to transcend death.

At the high window, shipping from all over the world

Being borned up and down the busy, yet contemplative, river;

Skylines drifting in and out of skylines in the cloudy valley;

Firelight at dusk, and city lights;

Beyond them the control tower of the airport on the hill –

A lighthouse in the sky flashing green to white to green;

Our black-and-white cat snoozing in the corner of a chair;

Pastels and etchings on the four walls, and over the mantelpiece

‘Van Gogh’s Grave’ and ‘Lovers in Water’,

A room wallpapered in books and family photograph albums

Chronicling the adventures and metamorphoses of family life:

In swaddling clothes in Mammy’s arms on baptism day;

Being a baby of nine months and not remembering it;

Face-down in a pram, incarcerated in a high chair;



Everybody, including strangers, wearing shop-window smiles;  
With Granny in Felixstowe, with Granny in Ballymaloe;  
In a group photo in First Infants, on a bike at thirteen;  
In the back garden in London, in the back garden in Cork;  
Performing a headstand after First Holy Communion;  
Getting a kiss from the Bishop on Confirmation Day;  
Straw hats in the Bois de Boulogne, wearing wings at the seaside;  
Mammy and Daddy holding hands on the Normandy Beaches;  
Mammy and Daddy at the wedding of Jeremiah and Margot;  
Mammy and Daddy queueing up for Last Tango in Paris;  
Boating on the Shannon, climbing mountains in Kerry;  
Building sandcastles in Killala, camping in Barley Cove;  
Picknicking in Moone, hide-and-go-seek in Clonmacnoise;  
Riding horses, cantering, jumping fences;  
Pushing out toy yachts in the pond in the Tuileries;  
The Irish College revisited in the Rue des Irlandais;  
Sipping on an orange presse through a straw on the roof of the Beaubourg;  
Dancing in Pere Lachaise, weeping at Auvers.  
Year in, year out, I pored over these albums accumulating,  
My children looking over my shoulder, exhilarated as I was,  
Their mother presiding at our ritual from a distance -  
The far side of the hearthrug, diffidently, proudly.  
Schoolbooks on the floor and pyjamas on the couch -  
Whose turn is it tonight to put the children to bed?

Our children swam about our home  
As if it were their private sea,  
Their own unique, symbiotic fluid



Of which their parents also partook.

Such is home - a sea of your own -

In which you hang upside down from the ceiling

With equanimity, while postcards from Thailand on the mantelpiece

Are raising their eyebrow markings benignly:

Your hands dangling their prayers to the floorboards of your home,

Sifting the sands underneath the surfaces of conversations.

The marine insect life of the family psyche.

A home of your own - or a sea of your own -

In which climbing the walls is as natural

As making love on the stairs;

In which when the telephone rings

Husband and wife are metamorphosed into smiling accomplices,

Both declining to answer it;

Initiating, instead, a yet more subversive kiss -

A kiss they have perhaps never attempted before -

And might never have dreamed of attempting

Were it not for the telephone belling.

Through the bannisters or along the bannister rails

The pyjama-clad children solemnly watching

Their parents at play, jumping up and down in support,

Race back to bed, gesticulating wordlessly:

The most subversive unit in society is the human family.

We're almost home, pet, almost home...

Our home is at...

I'll be home...

I have to go home now...

I want to go home now...

Are you feeling homesick?

Are you anxious to get home?...

I can't wait to get home...

Let's stay at home to tonight and...

What time will you be coming home at?...

If I'm not home by six at the latest, I'll phone...

We're nearly home, don't worry, we're nearly home...

But then with good reason

I was put out of my home:

By a keen wind felled.

I find myself now without a home

Having to live homeless in the alien, foreign city of Dublin.

It is an eerie enough feeling to be homesick

Yet knowing you will be going home next week;

It is an eerie feeling beyond all ornithological analysis

To be homesick knowing that there is no home to go to:

Day by day, creeping, crawling,

Moonlighting, escaping,

Bed-and-breakfast to bed-and-breakfast;

Hostels, centres, one-night hotels.

Homeless in Dublin,

Blown about the suburban streets at evening,

Peering in the windows of other people's homes,

Wondering what it must feel like

To be sitting around a fire -

Apache or Cherokee or Bourgeoisie -

Beholding the firelit faces of your family,

Beholding their starry or their TV gaze:

Windfall to Windfall - can you hear me?

Windfall to Windfall...

We're almost home, pet, don't worry anymore, we're almost home.

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