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WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Patrick Moran, *Green* (Salmon Poetry, 2008), €12.

Mark Granier, *The Sky Road* (Salmon Poetry, 2007), €12.

Jean O'Brien, *Lovely Legs* (Salmon Poetry, 2009), €12.

Enda Wyley, *To Wake to This* (Dedalus Press, 2009), €12.

Four new titles – three from Salmon and one from Dedalus – offer a shifting lens on the responses of contemporary poetry in the Republic to recent changes in Irish society. While the work of Patrick Moran, Mark Granier, Jean O'Brien, and Enda Wyley lacks any overt political or social commentary, there is a prevailing uncertainty in all their collections – from O'Brien's house-moving sequence to Granier's wanderlust – which betrays these introverted lyrics as poems of their time. A piece like Moran's 'London Irish', which until lately might have been considered old-fashioned, takes on a new relevance in the current climate, while O'Brien's pointedly titled 'Before', or her silage bales 'tightly / wrapped in funeral black', signal the end of an idealised, arguably non-existent rural Irish arcadia. Wyley, meanwhile, retreats from all such notions into the realm of maternal bliss, while Granier mostly abandons such fancy for the highways of the world at large. It is notable too that poetry about deceased parents is a presence in all four collections (though somewhat less in Wyley, who covered this topic extensively in 1998's *Socrates in the Garden*), as if to suggest a lack of direction in contemporary writing arising from Irish poetry's parental figures being largely deceased (and so unsatisfying to reproach), or Northern (culturally and commercially estranged), or simply enjoying the hard-won exile of American or British universities.

Of the four, it is Tipperary's Patrick Moran who most diligently grounds himself in the familiar. *Green*, his second collection, opens with a statement of intent where the poet challenges himself to accomplish things the hard way. He wonders if he 'should have lived / like all the others who just set a time-clock / or flick a switch to summon heat'; and, while the query and response structure of the poem leads to a somewhat predictable result ('if I'd done that, what would I have known / about fire's glow and afterglow'), it does demonstrate that, for Moran, process is part and parcel of result.

Yet the poet never allows blind dedication to tradition to limit his gaze, and the strongest poems in *Green* document the collision of the past and present – that interface we consciously ignore, 'where rumbling

