



Shedding a little light on the tail of truth

Ed Ruzicka

At Shakespeare & Company

We got lost in shadows, dust, stacks.

You found a copy of 'A Farewell to Arms'
that broke your heart in an entirely different way
than I would break it twelve years later.

I read translations of Baudelaire and Rimbaud
under my breath like they were urgent letters
addressed to someone still wailing
the wail of Adam expelled from grace.

At night Parisian street lamps
turned our skins into yellow parchment
which was very good in that
we had just begun

To write separate stories with pen-tips
Dipped into the dark wells of our hearts.

Where We Stand With One Another A Review of *Care* by Jennifer Horgan Maeve McKenna

Care, Jennifer Horgan's debut full collection, introduces a voice that is at once deeply personal and strikingly universal. Courageous in its vulnerability, this collection of forty-nine poems guides the reader through a wide landscape of emotions, relationships, experiences, and places. With each turn of the page, we are surprised yet still offered a space in which to situate ourselves. At times, that space is uncomfortable, but throughout the collection there is solace in shared human experiences and in the relationships we encounter.

The opening poem, 'It's Just A Dream I Had', begins with the arresting lines, 'she's slumped in the bath / I'm drawn to the grey hair inside her thighs.' It's a startling and graphic introduction, setting the tone for the unflinching imagery that appears throughout the book. Yet for every challenging image, Horgan offers unusual and arresting metaphors that temper the starkness. The poem engages with grief, an emotion universally experienced, and signals that this is a poet who will not shy away from the realities of living. Instead, she invites us to confront them alongside her.

Care is divided into five sections: (i) for her, (ii) for him, (iii) for them, (iv) for us, and (v) for what can bring us back together. This structure suggests inclusivity and accountability. The reader, whoever they may be, is implicated. The collection becomes not only an exploration of care, but a rallying call to practice it.

In section (i), the powerful 'Dismiss This' questions the speaker's right to be heard, hinting at the limited space afforded to women's voices in male-dominated environments. 'This will never go to

print,' the speaker asserts, and then, 'I've nothing good to say.' The poem pulses with female fury: 'Bladders hammered by years of old dears and children...' and 'I printed my own sweat on cotton sheets for men like you' culminating in the refrain 'dismiss, dismiss.' Horgan exposes both silencing and resistance, allowing anger to take up space on the page.

Section (ii) is an ode to Cork. The city is vividly rendered, yet these poems extend beyond place into political and social commentary. Economic migration is explored in 'He Leaves Inisturk', poor working conditions in 'Letter from an Old Man Standing at the New Cork Dock', social isolation and homelessness in 'What Was He Doing When You Saw Him?' and male dissociation in the nostalgic 'Crossing over Barrack Street' with the damning statement '...that this city doesn't care for them.' This is Horgan creating a community in which the reader is asked to acknowledge the shortcomings of society as we know it compared with times past. Yet, there is hope: 'and every stone heart-sick for them,' the poem ends.

Section (iii) turns to what will undoubtedly be immortalised in poetry: the pandemic. In 'Finding a Vaccine', Horgan reflects, 'We'd be less afraid' and 'it makes it difficult to see straight', capturing the disorientation and collective anxiety of that period. 'How we rage down radios,' she writes, succinctly distilling a time of fear and helplessness. Though the shortest section, it resonates powerfully, closing with 'Cocooning': 'we visit her through the window... / her hand pressed against the glass.' The image is haunting, evoking separation and isolation.

This emotional thread continues in section (iv), which confronts ageing, death and bereavement. In 'Home Visit after Bereavement', grief becomes animate and unsettling: 'I turned up like a bird of prey pecking...' The closing line, 'out of my mind never seemed more reasonable', is devastating in its honesty. Horgan does not romanticise loss; she renders it raw and destabilising.

In the tender and poignant 'Putting Up Your Crib' in section (v), the speaker addresses an adult as they arrange a Christmas crib. *Care* is expressed not through grand gestures but through the quiet rituals of shared domestic life: 'I fold the tissues up with more care...' Here, kindness resides in attentiveness.

The penultimate poem offers a clear call to unity and compassion. In 'The Chain', Horgan recounts seeking out a painter whose work she has encountered. This poem, focusing on the simple act of the artist rescuing a jackdaw, serves as a reminder to the reader of how care, both given and received, sustains us.

There is much to admire in this book. Throughout *Care*, Horgan writes with confidence and courage. Her invitation to the reader is deliberate and insistent; we cannot move through these poems without confronting ourselves. They compel us to reflect not only on how we have been cared for, but on how we care for others, and whether we are willing to do so more fully.

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Ed Ruzicka has published four books of poetry, most recently *In the Wind*. Ed's poems have appeared in the *Atlanta Review*, the *Chicago Literary Review*, *Rattle*, *Canary*, and many others. His poems have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Ed is president of the Poetry Society of Louisiana. He lives under live oak with his wife in Baton Rouge, LA.

Maeve McKenna is the author of two poetry pamphlets and holds an MA in Poetry from Queen's University, Belfast. She facilitates inclusive creative writing workshops across the North West of Ireland, working with community groups, schools and libraries. Often, she is out in nature touching trees and reimagining the magnitude of clouds.