



We were whisked off by you, trussed like sides of bacon
 Across your shoulders that smelt of herring and cod...



The similes of "bacon" juxtaposed with "herring and cod", show two cultures becoming infused, while at the same time giving the flavour that all the poet's senses are being ransacked. Listening to Sigur Rós, Ennis embarks like an Irish mythological hero on a voyage to other worlds. The cultural connections between Ireland's mythological wonder tales and the ancient Icelandic sagas provide a deep context throughout the collection. The title name, 'Ásbyrgi' – as well as being the location of the last concert the band gave during their *Heima* tour – is a canyon that lies in the north of Iceland with strong links to mythology. According to legend, the horse of Odin, the chief god of Norse mythology, stepped down there leaving its giant hoof print.



Fóras na Gaeilge

In the poem 'Salka' – taken from (Iceland's Nobel Prize winning author) Halldór Laxness' political love story, *Salka Valka* – ancient folklore is linked with the currently topical. While the poem can be enjoyed simply for its ballad musicality, there are deeper resonances hidden within. The poem is dedicated to Nadia and Maria, two members of the Russian feminist punk-rock collective Pussy Riot who are still serving terms in prison after they descended on a Moscow church wearing vibrant balaclavas, lip-synching "Mother of God, get rid of Putin!" Ennis' ballad begins:



Sleepy head, put down your head
 It's late, even the stars are in bed
 Nothing for it, daughter, but sleep.
 Figures mist in our heads. Don't weep...

The poem also uses the Irish language refrain, "Mál – ál – aléó" taken from the traditional Irish song 'Na Gamhna Geala', that laments a woman who yearns for the carefree days she spent as a child with calves before becoming a prisoner to circumstance. She curses the priest who forced her to marry to an old man.

One of the remarkable qualities to this collection is how the poems often follow a similar pattern to Sigur Rós' distinctive music, that begins with a slow downbeat which builds into a crescendo, or trailing off into repeated rises. Ennis also regularly uses the sonnet form, the rhythm and and rhymes giving the sway of music with the advantage of conversation between the octet and sestet, or opening quatrains, mid section and summary couplet. Various forms of rhyme knit the sound patterns together, as in the brilliant sonnet, 'Rembhnútur', meaning "black knot", which is also the title track of Sigur Rós' 2012 record. The poem begins, "Slipneir, slip not, slip knot, some hope, o come down not/ Reef knot, square knot, the double fisherman's / grinner knot... ". The woven word-music is tied up with Muldoonian wordplay and classical allusion. The overall quatrain structure, with rhyme, also reflects the Icelandic traditional four-line *rímur*.

However, more essential than form, it is the collection's molecular exploration into sound itself which proves the most fascinating. "In the beginning was the Sound and the Sound was the / Sound of sounds..." begins the poem, 'The Vonlenska of Jon', showing that music and language are primarily one and the same. But sound also contains a more personal resonance to Ennis as well. Within the

Issue 24



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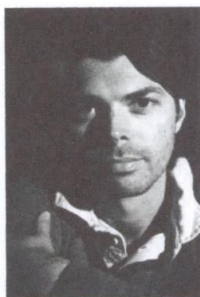
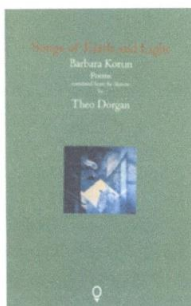
POSTPONING ÁSBYRGI:

Adam Wyeth reviews John Ennis's newest poetry collection.

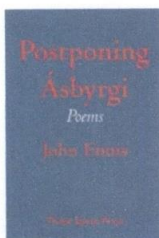
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ADAM WYETH was born in Sussex in 1978, and moved to Ireland, County Cork in 2000. His debut collection *Silent Music* was published by Salmon Poetry in 2011 and was commended by the Forward Poetry Prize (2012). His poetry has won and been commended in many competitions, including The Fish International Poetry Competition (winner, 2009). His work appears in several anthologies including *The Forward Prize Anthology* (2012) and *The Best of Irish Poetry* (2010). His poems have appeared in many literary magazines and journals, including: *The Stinging Fly*, *The SHOP*, *Poetry London* and *Magma*. Wyeth is a member of the Poetry Ireland Writers in Schools Scheme and a featured poet on the Poetry International Web. His forthcoming book, *The Hidden World of Poetry: Unravelling Celtic Mythology in Contemporary Irish Poetry* is due out with Salmon in autumn 2013. He runs an international online Creative Writing workshop at www.adamwyeth.com.



Postponing Ásbyrgi

John Ennis
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Postponing Ásbyrgi can be obtained from the author at Hightown, Coralstown, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, Ireland. All proceeds are going to Óryrki in Iceland, specifically to Andri Valgeirsson, programme manager, youth section. Price, Package & Postage total 15 euro. Also, from Graham at the Ewing Gallery, Glynmill Inn, Comer Brook, Newfoundland.