



ell in 1960  
); Michael  
Frank Miller);  
); Paul Celan



matter, *Oxygen* is an oddly bloodless book. In spite of Miller's fondness for internal organ metaphors, we never really get inside any of his characters.

"In the science room of his old school, dissected organs, human and animal, had been preserved in sealed bottles for the instruction of the pupils. He was sure there had been a lung there, floating in its syrup, an object that looked to have grown on the side of a tree or on a submerged rock, and which even as a young boy he had found improbable as the organ that funded human speech and laughter."

So muses László, before popping into Air France to buy the ticket that will take him to deliver a briefcase full of cash to an Albanian terrorist group in Budapest – a form of catharsis which, for a middle-aged gay bourgeois intellectual, this reader finds improbable to the point of unacceptable.

Yet *Oxygen* is on this year's Booker Prize longlist. Either I've missed something, or that list says more about the general state of English fiction than it does about this particular book.

● Arminta Wallace is an *Irish Times* journalist

# Kingdom

nracháin's 'Louth Wild Geese Veterans in the Hôtel Royal des Invalides' and the Rev David M. Eastwood's 'History of the Eastwood Family in Ireland' are noteworthy. Other contributors include Brendan Hall and Noel Ross himself, and Cólín Ó Drisceóil. There are also 10 pages of book reviews.

**The Grand Tour of Kerry.** Compiled by Penelope Durell and Cornelius Kelly  
Cailleach Books, £9.99

**L**AST year the same publishers and the same compilers gave us *The Grand Tour of Beara*, a collection of descriptive accounts of the Beara peninsula dating from 1593 to 1996. Now they have taken in the entire Kingdom and present the brief impressions of 68 visitors to Kerry, ranging from Giraldus Cambrensis c.1186 to Niall Williams and Christine Breen in 1990. In the centuries between, such exotic "tourists" as Sir William Petty, Thomas Moore, Thomas Carlyle, H.V. Morton and Robert Mitchum, as well as many others, left their written perceptions of the area, its rugged beauty and its people.

These are now presented in an attractive volume replete with historical photographs, etchings and portraits. It does not matter if at least 14 of the contributors to *The Grand Tour of Beara* also appear in this book as their contributions are different in content. But this reviewer will have to suggest that this particular Kerry literary cow must be milked nearly dry at this stage.

● Richard Roche is a local historian, author and critic

## 'The island was being secretive ...'

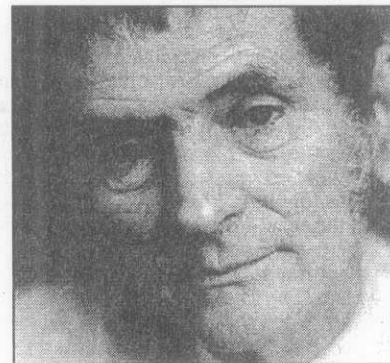
By Michael Hartnett

For Taffy

The island was being secretive  
and chose that day to wear  
its most opaque cloak of grey weather.  
Your eyes were also in that mood  
and chose not to be blue  
but grey and misunderstood.  
The finest globes of rain  
strung your face like many necklaces.

And then the island chose  
to show us all the symbols  
of the predatory life:  
hound hunted hare  
who stopped and watched us  
in our human hunt;  
hawk and lark  
rose up to buffet and clash wings  
until we could not tell  
which of these was hawk  
and which was lark.  
Below, wet to the bone,  
our clothes and voices leaden  
with the stark  
inconsequential talk  
of hawkvoice and houndvoice,  
dumbness of beloved hare and lark,  
we made our circles round each other.

Going away, we noticed at the sea-wall's edges  
crowns of green plants in quiet splendour.  
I had said, perhaps some god will send another real woman.  
Some god heard. Some god did send her.



● This previously unpublished poem by the late Michael Hartnett will appear in his *Collected Poems* published by Gallery Press which will be launched in Dublin on Thursday. Eigse Michael Hartnett opened in Newcastle West, Co Limerick, yesterday and continues over the weekend

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Pg 8 Weekend*