



Juliette Ryan and the Cement Mixer

The world is beauty and order,
beauty that springs from order,
but more, it is a breathing surface a rippling
a fragrance like spice enticing from the kitchen—
a pulse beating behind the embroidered veil,
a branch spreading leaves against sky,
displayed like hair on a pillow,

a pulse like the one that lay beneath
a heaving, shining grey sludge of concrete in the mixer
as the blades revolved inside,
so that she reached out her hand
as if to touch.

But her brother grabbed
her elbow in case she did touch and finished
losing the hand.

I want like her to touch,

as if reaching out to lay my hand on velvet
or on the skin of a muscular chest

or as Byron,
after travelling through four cantos, and eight years,
through four hundred and ninety-five Spenserian stanzas,
and across Europe and Turkey, so at last
he could finish with the pilgrim Harold and meet himself as a child,
said

that he laid his hand on the mane of the dark blue sea.

Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin

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