That Evening In July

Francis O’Hare

My quest, to find the one wild rose in the world, the only rose without a thorn, began somewhere between my first and second sip of sparkling wine that evening in July, under a heaven of renaissance blue, serenaded by ten thousand singing swallows.

My date, the type to make a strong man swallow like Orpheus entering the Underworld, was crossing her legs whilst discussing Betty Blue; how typically I sided with Dijaan, in viewing women as all roses in July and thorn-traps in September, as she sipped her own cool draught of the warm south, let slip one silken thigh over the other, like a swallow skimming water on an evening in July.

For such sights, men have burned half the known world, or penned slow-burning lines like when they begin the Beguine; I turned the air sea-blue with what I dreamed of doing to her and blew sweet Mediterranean zephyrs down her nape as the second bottle of dry sparkling began to work its magic. Twilight tasted of Prosecco as we both entered the rich, strange world of Belfast in the first week of July,

in the calm before the storm-clouds of July—
and the burning ground and the red, white and blue of the streets reminding us of the real world, where kids get stabbed with Stanley knives and cops turn blind eyes while Sicilian gangsters swallow their hard pride and accept a nice plea-bargain.

Up which blind alley, she ventured, we’d begun to lose track of where our evening in July,
with all its sexy shades of sunlight, had been swallowed, like the sea in a bottle, by the blue depths of the sapphire-sparkle and rose-hip of a summer’s night, promising the world to lovers as she slowly swallow-sipped my tongue with hers, began to spin my world under the blue heavens that evening in July.

_Biography_

Francis O’Hare was born in Newry, Co. Down, in 1970. Educated at Queen’s University, Belfast, and University of Ulster, Coleraine, he now works as a teacher. He co-authored _Outside the Walls_ (An Clochán Press, Belfast 1997) with Frank Sewell in 1997. A selection of poetry was included in _Poetry Introductions 1_ (Lagan Press, Belfast 2004). His work has been widely published in magazines in Britain and Ireland.