

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 sip-

ped 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-sip-
ped 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.