

JAN MORDENSKI

TABLE SERVICE

We are sitting, you and I, in Cushendall
in a sunny room. Outside
the gardens are bursting with sun
and water, but inside there is only
this linen-laid table, before us,
breakfast's remains greasing the
scenic cups and plates.

Where the eggs were, we see a
young lady--Pretty Nancy or Darling
Kate--clothed in layers of petticoats
and charming feminine bindings.
She rests here in stoneware for
an eternally coy moment, her hands
coiled about a shepherdess's staff,
smiling at life: the meadow, the
garden, the morning.

Slick from where the sausage lay
tight and hot, Roger, a ploughboy,
is walking with his dog.
He brandishes a green sally rod
with which he's tickling the
flowering vines, the ivy-scaled
shade trees. Underneath the
plate's smooth glaze he is whistling
a silent jolly tune.

His dog is aware of a provincial
energy; he feels streams must be
running nearby, trout jumping
their slippery banks. But
there is only this girl, and
this boy, and this incredibly etched
landscape caught in a permanent circle.

"More tea?" you ask. And though I am
full up, I say, "Oh Oh, yes."

The landlady's dog trots in from the yard
looks, startled, at us--as though he's
just heard the smallest perceptible
alarm--at the spattered white cloth,
at our fingers touching delicately
across acres of properly stylized
countryside.

JUSTIN MACDONNELL

LOSING GROUND

Just as one day
long ago pedal
over pedal child
hood cycled away
into the dark
three-wheeling, free
wheeling round
the corner and
across the park,