

The 'Interrupted Georgics' of Mushrooms in Contemporary Irish Poetry

Jessica Bundschuh
Universität Stuttgart, Germany
jessica.bundschuh@ilw.uni-stuttgart.de

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37536/ecozone.2021.12.2.4222>



Abstract

The vitality of the georgic mode operates counter to inertia and disorder, driven by the initiative of dynamic labor. Still, Edna Longley, in coining the term “interrupted georgics,” argues that the rupture of war disrupting an agricultural scene defines the georgic. Accordingly, the precariousness of Ireland and Northern Ireland during the Troubles and the EU Referendum in a (pre/post-)Brexit context acts as a felicitous starting point for a generic revival of the georgic mode. Through a selection of contemporary mushroom poems that meditate on this contested history over a 45-year period—Derek Mahon, “A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford” (1973), Paul Muldoon, “Gathering Mushrooms” (1983), Ruth Carr, “Mushroom” (1995), Chris Agee, “Mushrooming” (2003), Padraig Regan, “Rehydrating Mushrooms” (2018), and Ailbhe Darcy, “Mushrooms” (2018)—this paper considers how mushrooms embody the georgic mode for the purpose of ecological remediation. These lyric explorations of the Anthropocene under discussion replicate a symbiotic relationship between the human and nonhuman world as situated within a georgic trajectory. While Virgil does not mention in the *Georgics* cultivating, foraging, and gathering of mushrooms, these activities, like beekeeping and farming, embody enduring georgic values of rugged curiosity and dogged resilience. As the fruit of mycelial networks, lyrical mushrooms (re)distribute violence across agricultural interconnection, to span specificity and outward scope. As a result, the mushroom becomes a ‘companion species’ capable of assuming the role of co-teacher and co-impartor of knowledge to a poet-as-observer in awe of its ingenuity.

Keywords: Fungi, companion species, georgic, Anthropocene, Ireland / Northern Ireland.

Resumen

La vitalidad del modo geórgico, impulsada por la iniciativa del trabajo dinámico, contrarresta la inercia y el desorden. Sin embargo, Edna Longley, al acuñar el término de las “geórgicas interrumpidas”, sostiene que la ruptura creada por una guerra que interrumpe un escenario agrario es lo que define la poesía geórgica. Por consiguiente, la precariedad de Irlanda y de Irlanda del Norte durante el conflicto norirlandés y el referéndum sobre la Unión Europea en un contexto (pre/post-)Brexit funcionan como un punto de partida oportuno para un resurgimiento genérico del modo geórgico. A través de una selección de poesía contemporánea sobre las setas que refleja la historia violenta de Irlanda e Irlanda del Norte—Derek Mahon, “A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford” (1973), Paul Muldoon, “Gathering Mushrooms” (1983), Ruth Carr, “Mushroom” (1995), Chris Agee, “Mushrooming” (2003), y Padraig Regan, “Rehydrating Mushrooms” (2018)—este artículo considerará cómo las setas personifican el modo geórgico por el propósito de remediación ecológica. Estas exploraciones líricas del Antropoceno reproducen una relación simbiótica entre los mundos humano y no humano al situarse en una trayectoria geórgica. Aunque Virgilio no menciona en las *Geórgicas* el cultivo y la búsqueda de setas, estas actividades representan los valores geórgicos de una fuerte curiosidad y una resiliencia persistente. Siendo fruto de las redes miceliales, los hongos (re)distribuyen la violencia a través de la interconexión agraria, para abarcar especificidad y alcance exterior. Como resultado, la seta se convierte en una ‘especie de compañía’ capaz de asumir el rol de co-maestro impartiendo conocimiento a un poeta-observador impresionado por su ingenuidad.

Palabras clave: Fungi, especie de compañía, geórgico, Antropoceno, Irlanda /Irlanda del Norte.

Reviving the Georgic Mode in an Irish and Northern Irish Context

In *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (2015), Anna Tsing establishes disturbance and precarity as the triggers for environmental transformation: “disturbance is always in the middle of things,” wherein one disturbance perpetually “follows other disturbances” (160). Such a “sensorial phenomenon” of the Anthropocene marks the “experience of living in an increasingly diminished and toxic world” (Davis and Turpin 3). Herein, the cultivating work of the poet follows a trajectory begun with the agricultural labor of the farmer and the organic growth of the mushroom, which may flourish in the absence of a farmer. In particular, mushrooms in contemporary Irish and Northern Irish poetry emerge *in medias res*: midway through an interaction with, and an attempted rejuvenating of, a landscape in crisis. Thus, readers in search of scientifically-responsive literary enterprises may find a receptive partner in this agent of bioconversion: the humble mushroom.

In “Mushrooms” (2018), Dublin poet Ailbhe Darcy takes on the Polar Vortex and climate change in an address to her newborn child, the next generation:

Mushrooms could grow on a person all the same.
The body is a vertical farm [...]
They say the way to fix this mess
is to cultivate one's mushrooms and take up very little space. (28-29)

Darcy meets the seriousness of the environmental crisis with down-to-earth clarity: mushrooms deserve our attention as models of interconnectivity within a larger ecosystem, and as reminders of the fallacy of human exceptionalism. Further, Darcy directs this urgency toward the future, since the speaker's attempt to “fix this mess” is for the benefit of the child addressee: “Your father and I have begun a new generation [...] We've handed on the weather, the body vulnerable and brief, / and the fact of mushroom farmers” (28). A corresponding note clarifies that Darcy's mushroom farm refers to a particularized agricultural setting, since she wrote the poem while residing for a duration in the American Rust Belt and while visiting “the home of Rachel Swenie, who farms mushrooms in Chicago” (69). Thus, this lyric from an Irish poet, written while in an overseas landscape of heightened vulnerability—“Nights we lay awake in fear, expecting visitors with firearms / and unfamiliar turns of phrase”—embeds both the speaker and her child in a global ecological “apocalypse” (28). Within this animated locality, Darcy's tercets of persistent motion “flitter about” with an “insects' whirr” “to whirligig in a pocket” (28-9). They push readers swiftly from one line to the next, while maintaining a vaster and outward-looking georgic gaze from which to consider the Anthropocene and “ask if there might be some way back / to what we wanted when we first came” (28-9). Darcy cultivates, here, a productive alliance between humans and nonhumans by employing georgic poetics across a series of open-ended disturbances. Ultimately, Darcy resumes the labors of the farmer through her textual mushroom production.

Speaking of mushroom champions, for the last decade and a half, the mycologist Paul Stamets has become a leading advocate of fungi's ability to remove toxins from the environment. In his 2008 Ted Talk, Stamets refers to this process as “mycoremediation,”

calling mushrooms “soil magicians” and “the grand molecular disassemblers of nature” (00:046), due to their ability to transform organic waste into nutrition. Operating within a similar interspecies frame, Tsing claims that “fungi are indicator species for the human condition,” since “fungi are always companions to other species” (“Unruly” 144). From this point of view, we may recognize the mushroom’s contribution in a literary context as a co-teacher and co-impartor of knowledge to a poet-as-observer in awe of its ingenuity.

Admittedly, the shift from acknowledging the mushroom as a “soil magician” to a “lyric magician” requires a nimble poetic genre. In a 2003 lecture delivered to the Royal Irish Academy, Seamus Heaney describes his search for a genre that would remain robust in the midst of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, without becoming “vulnerable to accusations of artificiality” (“Eclogue” 1). Certainly, one of the great strengths of the didactic and down-to-earth georgic mode is its ability to sidestep artificiality through a timely recognition of “changes in weather, economic pressures” and “physical toil” (Fairer “Eco” 116). In this way, the genre responds with immediacy to the ongoing human-engineered environmental crisis.

As this argument intends to demonstrate, the precariousness of Ireland and Northern Ireland during the Troubles and the EU Referendum in a (pre/post-)Brexit context acts as a felicitous starting point for a generic embrace of the georgic mode. Although 2021 marks the 100-year anniversary of the Irish border and the birth of Northern Ireland, this border zone remains a site of fragility and erupting violence. Still, “mushrooms flourish” precisely here: “in agrarian seams: between fields and forest, and at the margins of zones of cultivation” (Tsing, “Unruly” 151). As active representatives of the georgic mode, mushrooms—capable of living and growing anywhere—may prompt both an acknowledgment of environmental crisis, and a georgic optimism for environmental rejuvenation. This argument contends that an encounter with the Anthropocene benefits from borders allowed to remain blurred, messy, and symbiotic. Through a selection of mushroom poems spanning a 45-year-period—Derek Mahon, “A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford” (1973), Paul Muldoon, “Gathering Mushrooms” (1983), Ruth Carr, “Mushroom” (1995), Chris Agee, “Mushrooming” (2003), Padraig Regan, “Rehydrating Mushrooms” (2018), and Ailbhe Darcy, “Mushrooms” (2018)—this paper proposes a georgic revival as a means to facilitate ecological remediation along these “agrarian seams.” Such a remediation is critical, not only amid the precarity of peace in Ireland and Northern Ireland, but as a necessary response to it.

Marking the Interruption(s) Embedded in the *Georgics*

While Virgil does not mention in the *Georgics* the cultivating, foraging, and gathering of mushrooms, these activities embody enduring georgic values of rugged curiosity and dogged resilience, like beekeeping and farming. As David Fairer explains, the georgic mode proceeds “through dissolution and loss to see renewal and fruition, and to locate something ‘grateful’ [...] in the hard labour of the fields” (“Eco” 112). Similarly, the “positive thrust” of georgic dynamicism “won against inertia and disorder” acts with “persistence, adaption, problem-solving,” and “initiative” (Fairer “Georgic” 464). Here,

akin to a mycelial network of microscopic threads and its fruiting bodies of mushrooms, the productively “resistant energy” of “recalcitrance” embedded in georgic contexts is “forever on the move,” while remaining responsive to local environments in “a world in process whose rewards are hard won,” fleeting, and “full of tension” (Fairer, “Eco” 111). As Fairer’s characterization attests, the georgic mode is well-suited to the wearying demands of a long-winded path to reconciliation among communities and the farmlands they cultivate in the renewed and ongoing border conflict between Ireland and Northern Ireland.

In choosing which English translation of Virgil’s the *Georgics* from which to quote, my choice of Peter Fallon is quite deliberate. Aside from the beauty of his translation, Fallon is a poet and the founder of The Gallery Press in County Meath, the pre-eminent publisher of contemporary Irish poetry since 1970, having published, early in their careers, both Mahon and Muldoon. Taking into account the translator’s biography, Fallon’s sensitivity to Virgil’s representation of an agricultural land embroiled in civil war is helpful. Indeed, Fallon explains in his “Translator’s Note” that his “partiality towards the *Georgics*” arises out of his own coming of age “in the tender aftermath of “Troubles”” where “Virgil’s delineation of the griefs and glories of a land in which people tried to found their lives, while their days were adumbrated by a civil war, was a touchstone” (xxxiv). Thus, a personal stake in the historical context of Virgil’s epic acts as a point of entry. Herein, the genre of the georgic straddles a diverse set of historical contexts, reinforcing its validity as a genre worthy of revival.

Focusing on both the material conditions of the original Latin text and an English translation highlights the transhistorical connection between the disturbances of civil war (then and now), and the “new landscape assemblages” that Tsing suggests may emerge from a “layering of global- and-local, expert-and-vernacular knowledge layers” (“Mushroom” 160-1). It is here that we locate sites of joint “livability” where “[p]recarious living is always an adventure” (Tsing, “Mushroom” 163). So, too, in the midst of a fraught history, the georgic mode remains “collaborative and progressive” and “organic, adaptive, ingenious, skillful, and useful,” even if war, or other tragedies, halt these “constructive works of peace” (Fairer, “Georgic” 459). From this dual perspective of living, then, the poems under consideration may actively participate in a larger Irish and Northern Irish history, while nonetheless burdened by an immediate tragedy.

Indeed, an interruption in the form of a violent suspension of agricultural labors concludes Book 1 of Virgil’s the *Georgics*:

For right and wrong are mixed up here, there’s so much warring everywhere,
evil has so many faces, and there is no regard for the labours
of the plough. Bereft of farmers, fields have run to a riot of weeds.
Scythes and sickles have been hammered into weapons of war. (1.504-8)

Here, Virgil offers readers an example of “interrupted georgics,” a term Edna Longley coins to describe a poem in which war “infiltrates an agricultural scenario” (466). Longley even claims that “the interruption may define the georgic” (468). Thus, the skill set of ingenuity and problem-solving traditionally the particular purview of hard-won

agricultural expertise and hands-on experience can, likewise, guide other multispecies interactions born out of interruption, like that of literary enterprises.

The interruption in georgic productivity may additionally be precisely what facilitates a singleminded drive to rebound after trauma, like that of Virgil's rural Italy recovering from civil war. Virgil transfers this drive into his four-part structure of the *Georgics*, which establishes a recuperative pattern through the proximity of endings and beginnings: from the pestilence of "a fester of pustules" "gnawing" "on cursed limbs" (3.564-6), to the sweetness of bees: "Which brings me to heaven's gift of honey, or manna, if you will" (4.1). So goes the swift shift of tonality between Books 3 and 4. The latter of which cushions, "far from the ways of the wind" (4.9), the prior intrusion of tragedy with its reassuringly formal address: Virgil's narrator directs readers (and the addressee) to a protected alcove that evades, for a short term, the incessant "wind" of destruction. Here, the reader and addressee may recharge in preparation for the possibility of an unforeseen event characteristic to any agricultural endeavor.

Practicing Verbal Mediation: The 'Arts of Noticing'

Poems about ecological vulnerability that attempt to facilitate remediation—rather than a nostalgic sigh for times gone by—nonetheless need the hopeful expansiveness of the georgic. The didactic georgic mode values persistence and adaptability as skills learned through a careful *observation* of an environment's potent rejuvenation. In this context, nuance and texture emerge. Sam Solnick contends that poems suited to the Anthropocene should teach readers how to sharpen their ability to perceive the "dynamic and emergent," which is "contingent on shifting conditions" (211). In this regard, Tsing's celebration of the "arts of noticing" ("Mushroom" 39) resonates well with Solnick's call to readers. Thankfully, Tsing is not deterred by those who deem the practice of noticing "archaic," since a slow and steady observation is precisely what draws out the authentically messy stories of "interrupting geographies and tempos" ("Mushroom" 37) that productively challenge scientific research questions through their literary digressions, like those on display in this selection of mushroom poems.

The "arts of noticing" ("Mushroom" 39) within a mushroom context may productively start with what biologist Merlin Sheldrake, in *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds, and Shape Our Futures* (2020), explains as the omnipresent "master concept" of the "'web of life' [that] underpins modern scientific conceptions of nature," namely, "the idea that all things are interconnected." He regrets that it may have "collapsed into a cliché." Despite its overuse as a concept, however, it cannot be denied that mycelial fungi are the very shapes they inhabit; in other words, "[t]hey *are* flexible networks that ceaselessly remodel themselves" (76). Do note that my intention throughout this paper is not to sloppily conflate fungal structures (mushrooms and mycelia), but to acknowledge their vital interconnection, mirroring the very shape of fungi themselves. Further, my privileging of mushrooms—the fruiting bodies of fungi—responds not only to a similar focus in the poetic texts themselves. It is also a nod to the

unseen and below-ground manifestations only hinted at by the presence of their above-ground counterparts.

To better establish a thread between what is seen and unseen, above ground and below, it is useful to describe how fungi inhabit space. To do so, though, one must assume a position anterior to that of the human: Fungi feed by digesting “the world where it is,” to “absorb it into their bodies.” That is, while humans and animals put food into their bodies, “fungi put their bodies in food.” Further, the more of the world fungi come in contact with—their long and branched ‘bodies’ composed of a single cell wall—“the more they can consume” (Sheldrake 57). Evocatively, mycelium “decants itself into its surroundings,” like water, constantly shapeshifting as a “living, growing opportunistic investigation—speculation in bodily form” (Sheldrake 58). Through this unpredictable expansion, fungi employ pressure to break through barriers, speedily and stealthily entering a new territory.

In tracking this discursive nonhuman history, as above, it is possible to remain open to an object-relations approach characterized by “multi-layered portraits of ecological relationality in the Anthropocene” (Ronda 341), where positions remain “non-linear” and “recursive, rather than developmentally teleological,” fostering “ongoing practices rather than singular experiences” (Ronda 340). Margaret Ronda, in adopting this approach in her work on ecological affect, aligns her argument both with the textured georgic encounter of farming the land day-after-day, and with Tsing’s encouragement to frankly acknowledge our joint human and nonhuman ecological precarity, a result of unavoidable interdependence. Above all, Tsing’s declaration that “human nature is an interspecies relationship” (“Unruly” 144) remains central to the lyrical investigations to follow.

A poem’s remedial value relies on its ability to make connections experientially palpable for the reader, like the shapeshifting movement of mycelium. A poet’s material, after all, is language, not soil, as Kevis Goodman reminds us: the *Georgics* is a “work of verbal mediation” that highlights “the relationship between words and things” and “linguistic control” (42-3). Granted, while some linguistic limitations inherent to ecological mediation remain intact, those experiments situated within a georgic trajectory are frequently unsettled, knotty, and vulnerable, yet engaged and future-looking. As a result, the poetic strategies under discussion here of juxtaposition, metaphor, and intertextuality, among others, serve the larger objectives of a mediated poetic engagement with the nonhuman, rooted in humility and observation. In a nutshell, these individual strategies work in tandem to (re)create a formal experience for the reader, a sum greater than its parts.

To better contextualize this verbal mediation in the *Georgics*, let us revisit an example discussed above in which Virgil interrupts the labor in the fields, at the end of Book 1, with mention of “hostilities in Germany” and “Neighboring cities [that] renege on what they pledged and launch attacks” (1.509-10). From this image of terror, in which “scythes and sickles” have been repurposed into “weapons of war,” Virgil propels himself forward with the famous simile of the chariot driver, Octavian, out of control:

the whole world's at loggerheads, a blasphemous battle,
as when, right from the ready, steady, go, chariots quicken on a track
until the driver hasn't a hope of holding the reins and he's carried away
by a team that pays heed to nothing, wildly away and no control.
(1.511-14; my emphasis)

Some 450 lines earlier in Book 1, Octavian harnesses this same chariot-plough to create order (not disorder) in his agricultural landscape; therein, Virgil, ever the pedagogical poet, offers instructions of how to assemble a chariot-plough from an "eight-foot pole" of "pliant elm," "for the tiller a length of beech to steer" (1.170-75).

Virgil's decision to merge the chariot and the plough is politically motivated, despite the agricultural context. This hybrid "unites in one image the deeply rooted Roman myth" (218) of the quest for structure, as Virgil scholar Robert McKay Wilhelm claims: "field and forum, vines and civilization, horses and men, ploughman and chariot-statesman who, in unity, struggle to quiet the unbridled forces threatening both the georgic and the political worlds" (218). The seminal image of the chariot-plough unites the above listed "network of associations [...] all striving for control" (McKay Wilhelm 230). As a result, the careening chariot at the end of Book 1 acts both as a simile for the state following the assassination of Caesar—the chariot-statesman—and for the deteriorating condition of the agricultural world, against which Octavian and the poet both struggle when a sword replaces a plough. Significantly, Virgil's metaphor remains expansive, while still valuing the local, such that Virgil does not rob the scene of its actuality; in this regard, the *Georgics* is a model for the Irish lyrics at hand, which assiduously evoke the entangled movements of fungi slipping through barriers, to span specificity and scope.

Echoing Outward: Derek Mahon's "A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford"

As the initial stopping-off point in our Irish and Northern Irish mushroom trajectory, the bifurcated scope of Derek Mahon's much-discussed "A Disused Shed *in Co. Wexford*" (emphasis added) becomes immediately clear in the title. Mahon commits himself to a *particularized* portrait of "lime crevices behind rippling rain barrels, / dog corners of dog burials" (34). The outward expansion, thereafter, begins with an otherworldly opening of the "creaking lock / and creak of hinges; magi, moonmen, / powdery prisoners of the old regime" (35). Thus, Mahon's mushroom metaphor functions within two distinct frameworks: a mycelial network, on the one hand, and the sectarian violence in Northern Ireland, on the other.

Adrian Frazier contends that there are few post-Yeats Irish poems on which all anthologies of contemporary Irish poetry agree as canonical expect one: Derek Mahon's "A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford," written shortly after Bloody Sunday in 1972. Frazier argues that Mahon's poem has been granted this honor because of its ability to absorb whatever historical conflict a reader chooses to invoke, and thus gives back "a full, complex understanding of history, of the weak, the voiceless, the sentient" (200). Indeed, Mahon dedicates the poem to his friend and novelist J.G. Farrell, author of the ironic Big

House novel, *Troubles* (published in 1970 and belatedly awarded the Lost Man Booker Prize in 2010), set in the midst of the 1922-3 Irish Civil War at the Majestic Hotel with its abandoned sheds and burned-down buildings, the setting for Mahon's poem.

Mahon's "voiceless" representatives of history—the "lost people of Treblinka and Pompeii"—are a shed of abandoned mushrooms, rediscovered 50 years later in the midst of the Troubles:

deep in the grounds of a burnt-out hotel,
among the bathtubs and the washbasins
a thousand mushrooms crowd to a keyhole [...]
What should they do there but desire? (34)

Mahon's mushrooms, their "pale flesh flaking / into the earth" as they "lift frail heads," "are begging us" "to speak on their behalf" (35). Mahon's desire in this poem to find a literary response adequate to the demands of a fraught historical correlative is not new to Ireland. Consider how hesitant W.B. Yeats had been to publish his now ubiquitous "Easter, 1916," waiting four years beyond the events of the Easter Rising, out of concern for which parties, among many contenders, he was bound to insult.

Mahon explains in a 2000 interview with poet Eamon Grennan that when he "write[s] about the dead of Treblinka and Pompeii [...] included in that are the dead of Dungiven and Magherafelt," referencing sites in County Derry of sectarian violence. To uphold his conviction that "you couldn't take sides," Mahon thus avoids "writ[ing] directly" about the Troubles by instead grounding his mushroom colony, abandoned by "the gravel-crunching, interminable departure / of the expropriated mycologist," in a larger community of a "flash-bulb firing squad" beyond their narrow "trickle of masonry" (34-5). In this indirect meditation on the Northern Ireland conflict, then, Mahon returns to the abandoned scene drawn by the calls of "a thousand mushrooms," "'Save us, save us,' they seem to say" (34-5), in contrast to a dispossessed mycologist who "never came back" (34).

Mahon's poem is a testament to reciprocal and responsive interactions between humans and nonhumans. The opening line, "Even now there are places where a thought might grow," immediately establishes the potentiality for communication and expansion, "a kind of panorama of panoramas, an ecstatic dilation which vibrates with distant voices" (Redmond 433). Thus, the poem establishes a corridor for growth, beginning with an "echo" that might have been "trapped for ever," but "even now" relinquishes the "ghost of a scream," despite having long been "racked by drought" (34-5). In essence, the georgic emblem of the mushroom has the power to resonate with those outside of its closed society, expanding a formerly cut-off network through Mahon's mushrooms poignantly ventriloquized in the final line, "let not our naive labours have been in vain!" (35). This final echo of mushroom-speak prevents readers from leaving Mahon's poetic frame without first pausing and noticing, as Tsing insists is important. In an essay on the nuclear catastrophe following Hiroshima (a setting of import in Carr's poem), Jean-Luc Nancy urges us to "remain exposed," like Mahon's mushrooms, amid environmental crises, "think[ing] about what is happening" (8), while acknowledging those in a state of either arrival or departure.

Questioning Inheritance: Paul Muldoon's "Gathering Mushrooms"

The historical reach of Paul Muldoon's "Gathering Mushrooms," like Mahon's "A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford," is expansive, described as "a landmark for younger Irish writers," and an "essential equipment for living" (Frazier 200). Reaching backward in time, Muldoon acknowledges an ancient relationship between farming and combat. Here, he follows Virgil, who arranges vines like soldiers in formation in Book 2 of the *Georgics*. That is, Muldoon refers to his mushroom-farmer father as an "ancient warrior / before the rising tide," who will work steadily, "without breaking rhythm" (106). He, like a soldier, wears a general-issue uniform: "the same old donkey-jacket / and the sawn-off waders" with a "peaked cap," and commands regulation gear: "a knife, two punnets, a bucket" (105). As Fran Brearton explains, Muldoon's

father becomes both a symbol of the past and a trustworthy starting point for the leap into an unknown future. Patrick Muldoon stands as representative of a particular way of life—not the academic or intellectual life, but a more instinctive rural stability: mushrooms, but not magic mushrooms. (48)

This representative mushroom farmer heralds from a distant age: a warrior from long ago who "has opened the gates of Troy" (105). Intertextually, then, Muldoon's father opens the gates in Mahon's elegy for the "wordless" mushroom collective, "begging us" "not to close the door again" (Mahon 35). Muldoon's speaker, too, assists the agricultural efforts of the father: "We have taken our pitchforks to the wind" (105). Working in tandem, together they embody georgic labors of physical toil and dynamic motion:

The mushroom shed is windowless, wide,
its high-stacked wooden trays
hosed down with formaldehyde [...]
to that first load of horse manure.
Barley straw. Gypsum. Dried blood. Ammonia. (105)

In this description, Muldoon revels in the uncomfortable details of a food product that rises from a grave of "formaldehyde," "horse manure," "dried blood," and "ammonia." This "windowless" "shed," in which the father tirelessly works, "so on and so forth till kingdom come," transmogrifies, in the final stanza, into the dirty protests of IRA prisoners in Long Kesh. Across these five interconnected sonnets, the father spans a historical divide, from ancient Troy, to the H-Block of Long Kesh prison and its 1981 Irish hunger strike. Interposed mid-way into this trajectory, in the second sonnet, is another georgic interruption of "the fire bomb / that sent Malone House sky-high" (105), a reference to the 1972 IRA firebomb in Belfast, which destroyed the entire collection the Ulster Museum's textile collection. An assault on woven textiles is an assault on networked structures already "sodden with rain" in the first sonnet, in the form of the mother's "hand-embroidered" "tablecloth" "flapping through the yard" (105), like a white handkerchief of reconciliation, ignored for now.

Muldoon reclaims the handkerchief image in the final sonnet, vocalized by the speaker's friend hallucinating on magic mushrooms, who urges appeasement: "let straw and dung give a spring to your step," "lie down with us now," and "wrap / yourself in the

soiled grey blanket of Irish rain / that will, one day, bleach itself white" (108). Just as Virgil transforms Octavian's plough into a war chariot and then back into a tool of agriculture, so, too, Muldoon's linen—part of Belfast's heralded past—re-establishes a mycelial connection of conciliation, despite its violent manifestations earlier in the poem. That is, initially, the linen is merely a soggy mess on the mother's line; then it becomes political as the destroyed treasure in a cultural archive—leaving the Keeper of Applied Art at the Ulster Museum in anguish: "We might have wept with Elizabeth McCrum" (105). Lastly, the linen transforms into another object of precarity, as a blanket garb to replace the displaced Long Kesh prison uniform. Reconstituted in these final lines, the tablecloth regains its earlier "whiteness" in georgic perseverance, despite the "Irish rain": "*Lie down and wait.*" Here, it is linguistically webbed together by the heroic couplet off-rhyme of "white" and "wait" (106).

Granted, Muldoon, in his speaker's interlude into drug use—"we were thinking only of psilocybin" (105)—refuses to directly accept the patriarchal line of mushroom farming. Still, the Trojan horse from the first stanza, a mythical stand-in for the sneaky ability to outwit a nemesis in war, becomes absorbed into the speaker's psychedelic trip on magic mushrooms, now cut free from the horse's limbs of motion: "my head had grown into the head of a horse" (106). Thus, like the image of the Trojan horse, one moment and one object/subject embeds itself in another: the speaker has imaginatively *become* the father's tool, a device for intrusion into enemy territory. And, thus, the power of the mycelial web is as active as ever, overcoming rupture to reinstate georgic values of order and hope for the future:

[...] *Your only hope
is to come back. If sing you must, let your song
tell of treading your own dung.* (106)

The final message balances solitary aesthetic efforts of "*your song*" against a recollection of multiple communal memories of tragedy. Ultimately, Muldoon affirms his own identifications amid Northern Ireland's conflicting alliances; thus, the mushrooms that initiate the journey never become universally static materializations.

"Gathering Mushrooms" is, ultimately, Muldoon's linguistic equivalent to his father's art of "coaxing" (106) mushrooms from wooden trays, to buckets and punnets; in this regard, it is similar to how "Digging"—positioned as the first poem in *Selected Poems 1966-1987*—is Seamus Heaney's verbal response to both his father's soil plotting and his grandfather's turf cutting. Consider Heaney's infamous comparison in "Digging" of a spade to a "squat pen" that "rests" "snug as a gun" (3), a dangerous parallel in Northern Ireland in 1964. Both Muldoon and Heaney salute the natural world through their emotional adjacency to an agricultural lineage that grounds their poetic projects. As a result, they may straddle material and generational divides, much like the mushroom and its mycelial parentage, above ground and below.

Oscillating Genres: Chris Agee's "Mushrooming"

One path to simultaneously negotiate both topographic and literary inheritance is through genre. That is, an engagement with inherited genres, like georgic and pastoral, affords the poet an opportunity to bring them into kinetic interaction, as Chris Agee does in "Mushrooming." Herein, Agee embraces Tsing's charge to practice the art of noticing by both temporally speeding up and slowing down the landscape under observation. Agee, as a result, provides a response for how *form* can function as a site to negotiate an Anthropocene aesthetics that fosters "forms of cooperation that escape" a "self-destructive logic" (Horn and Bergthaller 8). Without evading the underlying awareness of occupying a damaged planet (explored by Tsing et al. in *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts of the Anthropocene*), Agee immediately initiates an escape in the first stanza. Here, the speaker witnesses a pastoral slowing down of time: "Nothing stills the woods to silence / like the aftermath of rains," and then continues with "the meadow-crickets quenched, / the boughs and saplings of birch and pine [...] shining / here and there with sunshafts from parted cloud." In this atemporal space, "time inspired," readers enter the grandness of mythology: "The Greeks felt the mystery of Zeus, / the lightning's muse" (51). The arrival of Zeus's lightning bolts, however, signals an oncoming shift in genre and temporality.

Once we arrive at Agee's fourth tercet, the "dark labour of fungi" ensues and the scene becomes more accelerated. That is, Agee replaces the "mottle[d]" light and "desultory plops" of rain from the first and second stanzas with the dynamic action of fungi: "Vicarious as the uprush / of poetry, the delicate caps of mushrooms / thrust through the earth's rot" (51). The georgic mode, in this instance, powerfully aligns with the represented fungi, such that the "meandering wall" on which lichen and Indian pipe mushroom sprout is a real-world stand-in for "Frost's art" (51), recalling Robert Frost's "Mending Wall," another North American equivalency. Over the course of the poem, readers crisscross mycelial-like from "the Eden of amateur mycology," listing Adam-like the many lyrical names of mushrooms, "*Chanterelle, Thimble-cap, Velvet-footed Pax*" and "*Voluminous Milky*," to the ghosts of ecological destruction: "fishstink and profusion of latex" (51). In both modes, Agee freely shows readers his cards: he is a poet looking at mushrooms as a poet would, through the wide lens of indirection, roping together semblance and actuality.

By doubling the genres on hand, Agee expands his poem's potentiality for ecological regeneration: "half-masked by a layer of leaves, / by mossy vestiges of treetrunks" (51). Further, he seeks a language of mushrooming, "a language all of its own / neither prose nor song, / not animal, yet not quite plant" (52). Let us recall Mahon's mushrooms that similarly seek to be heard in their own language. Both poets, practicing the object-relations approach of noticing, provide a space in which companion species may define the auditory textures of their own narratives.

Over the course of his twelve tercets—and two sets of pastoral/georgic oscillations—readers witness Agee teasing out whether genre or genus defines the language of fungi. In his attempt to classify "their svelte ethereal flesh" (52), he ultimately

lands on fungi's speed and adaptive capacity. That is, in the final tercet, the mushrooms, "one-day miracles of the world's design" (52), transform under the poet's gaze. Agee structures the final line as a simile, contending that mushrooms are "like haikus in the woodland epic of birth and decay" (52). In this final gesture, the poem calls for balance between genres at two ends of the length spectrum: the haiku and the epic. By challenging genre boundaries, Agee, likewise, challenges the traditional separation between agricultural processes and literary practices, and between the sciences and the humanities, which is critical to a serious engagement with the Anthropocene.

Connecting Strangers: Padraig Regan's "Rehydrating Mushrooms"

Just as Agee underpins his poem's argument across mycelial interconnection, so, too, does Padraig Regan establish a formal structure to replicate the nonhuman world. Regan begins "Rehydrating Mushrooms" by literally 'decanting' (in Sheldrake's terminology) the mushroom into the poetic space. In other words, the movements of the mushroom (and its mycelial parentage) track the poem's development, advancing stealthily underground and underfoot, from stanza to stanza. The first couplet begins with a concession in continuous present that directs readers to a future moment, "I'm thinking of how mushrooms will haunt a wet log." Here, the speaker employs an admission as a wedge into a simile: "like bulbous ghosts; / of how a mushroom may be considered a travesty of a flower / in a way that a wolf may be a travesty of a grandmother" (81). This first observation, then, enables the speaker to productively consider the equivalence, or "travesty" thereof, between things: mushrooms to ghosts and then flowers, and wolves to grandmothers.

Regan's initial simile establishes a pattern of movement the rest of "Rehydrating Mushrooms" will continue to sustain. Two stanzas after their natural appearance on a log, Regan returns to the literal act of "adding water to mushrooms," rejuvenating the mushroom's potential for reverie. It is here that readers encounter another simile, "like dull confetti," and so begins the transformation from edible mushrooms, to a non-edible object in the poet's toolkit, namely paper. Significantly, the paper is shredded. Thus, when the "swirling" mushrooms "begin to *print* / themselves onto the water, their flavor" (81; emphasis added), the word "print" gains an additional resonance. In effect, it can now "imprint" itself, or leave its mark. In this fashion, the shredded paper reconstitutes itself, like the rehydrated mushrooms, to become a site for "printing" and merging, similar to the mushrooms that leech their taste into the water. Herein, both objects shapeshift. Thereafter, the paper simile appears once more, reinforced yet again by water, in the form of rain for which the speaker has long awaited and now "greet[s]" "in a tracing-paper-thin dress, no tights." With tights absent, the rain "falls on [the speaker's] head" and "seeps into" "undisclosed locations" (81).

An oscillation between the mediating work of the poet—composing by hand on paper—and the powerful infusion of the reconstituted mushrooms is suited to Regan's long-lined couplets of paired and elongated interaction. This is the crux of the georgic genre: Virgil's agricultural project, if we recall Goodman's claim above, is a mediation of

the physical work of a poet who constructs an interspecies frame (akin to Regan's grandmother and wet log). Further, Goodman explains that the *Georgics*

are as much about the tending of words as they are about agriculture and other forms of terriculture: they are concerned not only with words (*verba*) as bearers of things (*res*) but also with words *as* things, exerting friction within representation and requiring labor and care. (Goodman 11)

In this regard, taking nature seriously entails taking language seriously, as well. Words literally are carriers, *imprinted* things, engaged in mycelial sprawl in this lyric selection in which mushrooms prominently feature. Ultimately, Regan's work commits to intertwining species, images, and moods to simulate a mycelial footprint of expansion.

After signaling a vastness in the first line in which the mushroom appears in Regan's poetic space, it reconfigures itself. That is, it transitions from peaceful observation to "bulbous ghosts." In this 'decanted' image, *the speaker*—the human agent and source of responsibility—becomes the point of interconnection:

[...] Personally, I don't
believe in ghosts, but it has been three months since a man was shot

in a street just next to where I live & now it seems the ghosts are everywhere:
in clouds that stay around the fringes of the sky, in a blur in a photograph

when the camera jerked away, in a thumbprint smudge on my glasses lens. (81)

The preponderance of mushrooms cropping up on the "wet log" relies, additionally, on the presence of water, already engaged in transformative work. Let us recall Tsing's claim (expanding on Donna Haraway's *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Others*, 2003) that mushrooms are a 'companion species.' Indeed, companionship guides the series of peripheral sightings that follow, from a "thumbprint smudge," "a blur" in a photograph, a fringing "cloud" in the sky about to rain, to the ghosts "everywhere," even though the speaker claims to not believe in their existence. Further, the shooting to which the poem refers is that of Stephen Carson, murdered on February 25th, 2016 in the bathroom of his Walmer Street apartment in Belfast (Regan interview).

Once violence enters the poetic space, it hovers like a mycelial underpresence across the couplets, observed by the speaker in even the smallest distractions. In each of these instances, readers encounter a point of contact between two ancillary forces or objects along an "agrarian seam," observable in a blur or a smudge. Thus, the murder of a stranger in Belfast occupies the poem's metaphorical plane, like a mushroom spore print and lurking tragedy. Finally, in the final image, the rain falls, its long-awaited arrival recalling the last section of T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" (1922), since a "week without rain is enough to set" the speaker's "skin ticking." As we have come to expect in a poem of interspecies parallels, Regan compares the rain's falling to a human product, namely, "a bolt of gauze." Thus, rain arrives both as a "bolt" of thunder *and* as a bundle of "gauze" meant for tending to wounds; the latter reference returns readers to Stephen Carson shot "three months since," still hovering after his introduction five couplets earlier (81).

Above all, "Rehydrating Mushrooms" honors interconnection between strangers, human and nonhuman. In the overlapping space between those strangers, an intimacy of

compassion flourishes, since as the rain reaches the speaker's body, so, too, it "seeps into the water table," passing through other "bodies," we are told. The mushroom, therefore, effectively proposes a means of remediation across an interruption of violence by channeling water to hydrate the mushroom both for human consumption and for a nonhuman reconstitution of its earlier natural form. Despite this nonhuman remediation, though, the poet cannot erase that Stephen Carson was needlessly shot while dialing 999 in the presence of his partner and son by those driven by criminal vengeance (McDonald). The poem's memorialization and linguistic reconstitution of this dead stranger—Regan's neighbor and fellow resident of Belfast—becomes even more important for its ability to step across distance. Further, the resulting georgic elegy is not for Carson alone, as the last grounding sentence suggests: "It is the first Monday of June 2016," recalling the last grounding line in Elizabeth Bishop's "In the Waiting Room" (1976), an example of North American expansion: "and it was still the fifth / of February, 1918" when the child speaker suddenly remembers "The War was on / Outside" (161). For Regan's speaker, similarly, the month is significant because it conjoins another 'war,' the shooting of 49 far-off individuals, yet interlinked in mycelial fashion, at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida on June 12th, 2016. This tragedy is also set against the backdrop of the EU Referendum on June 24th, 2016 in which Northern Ireland voted, to no avail, to remain in Europe, hoping to stay connected to a larger whole (Regan interview). However, within the dramatic context of the poetic frame, the speaker alludes to these interconnections on the "first Monday of June 2016" (81), that is, on June 6th; thus, the speaker still stands before all that is to follow in that tragic month, establishing another point of intersection across temporalities, as Regan has also done across spatiality and species. In the end, readers are left with a strong sense of "language consciously *at work*," since, as Fairer explains, "the decorum of georgic is the opposite of easy and refined." In Regan's frame, likewise, "progress is won through resistance" ("Georgic" 467) and the dogged work of poetic mediation.

Embedded Tragedies: Ruth Carr's "Mushrooms"

Ruth Carr, like Padraig Regan, begins "Mushrooms" in the act of tending to, and establishing a relationship with, the mushroom as a material manifestation of both violence and remediation. Once again, verbal meditation begins as the mushroom comes in contact with its sustaining companion of water: "I am rising milk white mushrooms / under the tap" (54). The mushroom in Regan's fashioning begins in its natural landscape, only to enter the domestic space once the poet transports it there (and, once ingested by the speaker, the mushroom later returns indirectly to the rain). In contrast, in Carr's poetic arc, the mushroom begins in the domestic space, as an agricultural product being prepped for a meal (like Regan's), to then return to its agricultural habitat in the penultimate line: "I visualize a mushroom field at dawn." Over the course of the poem, Carr's mushroom, yet again in parallel to Regan, ruptures the domestic scene. As a result, the poet accommodates a grounded georgic expansiveness, like Mahon who links "Treblinka" and "Pompeii" (35) on the same line.

If we track the network of associations that intersect Carr's "Mushroom," it begins with the *whiteness* of the mushroom the speaker cleans. This color, likewise of import for Muldoon's trajectory, reminds the speaker of a nearby infant, the addressee of the poem, whose "mouth opens *birdlike* / To gulp all the world it can" (54; emphasis added). Here is an animal reversal of Sylvia Plath's infant in "Morning Song," whose "mouth opens clean as a *cat's*" (157; emphasis added). This bears mentioning since Plath's 1959 poem, "Mushrooms"—"So many of us!" (139)—is the North American prologue that initiates this Irish poetic mushroom trajectory, as a comparison of it against Mahon's poem, published over a decade thereafter, bears out. In this way, Mahon establishes a transatlantic expansiveness, like Darcy's poem at the outset, echoing across a jumbled temporal and spatial interconnectivity. (Indeed, both David Kennedy [*Irish Studies Review*, 2010] and James McElroy [*An Irish Quarterly Review*, 2018] establish Plath as Mahon's textual antecedent.) From the open mouth of the child (Plath's and Carr's), the speaker witnesses another white object: "A sliver of white in all that pink— / The first tooth is through" (54); next, she leaps to another vulnerable subject, the "girl's voice on the airwaves," speaking, "Fifty years on," about the after-effects of Hiroshima, "Shocked by the hole / Where her sister's cheek should be, / She can see right through to the teeth" (54). This startling image breaks the poem apart, forcing readers to pause 'exposed' and implicated in a way that Nancy would honor. Similarly, Karen Barad contends that a connection between "terrestrial and atmospheric mushrooms" exists in an "uncanny material topology" in which each inhabits the other, like that of "radiotrophic mushrooms thriv[ing] in nuclear contaminated areas" (116).

Georgic-like in its precision and specificity, the white of the mushroom—aligned initially with the goodness of milk—introduces its very (embedded) interruption. That is, Carr transposes the mushroom into an image of horrific violence, specifically a nuclear mushroom cloud: "I am watching skin peel like paint / Plants recoil into themselves / Seeking their own shadow" (55). This hole in the sister's cheek, the speaker declares, "Fragments everything," such that "Thousands of splinters mosaic her child form, / This is the nuclear act embedded in flesh" (54). Here, Regan's "dull confetti" turns maliciously into a "mosaic" of "splinters."

Yet again, the vocation (and intervention) of the poet becomes significant when the poet "visualizes" directly onto "the blank white space that is a mushroom" in the final stanza. This "blank white space," like the page on which the poem is printed, follows the piercing description of the girl on the airwaves. In her attempt to regain equilibrium, the poet, thereby, overlays her literary labors on top of agricultural labors: "I *visualize* a mushroom field at dawn. / I drop one and it's gone" (55; my emphasis). Now, the mushroom returns to its natural ecosystem and preferred time of day. And, yet, there is violence embedded in the word "drop" and its connection to a bomber jet that "drops" a bomb before "it's gone." In the Irish context, "drop" echoes back to the famous last line of Yeats's 1928 poem, "Leda and the Swan": "Before the indifferent beak could let her *drop*?" (215; emphasis added). Yeats's Leda is forever caught in Zeus's beak, since the poetic frame closes with her mid-air. Thus, Yeats displaces Leda's post-rape tragedy to hold off

the wars that he knows will come from this "engendering": "The broken wall, the burning room and tower / And Agamemnon dead" (214), and the sonnet, thereby, cannot close.

The Troubles Archive (<http://www.troublesarchive.com/>) catalogues Carr's poem alongside other sectarian poems, a reminder that the localized violence of the Troubles remains the backdrop to the WWII violence fifty years past. In contrast to Yeats, Carr does indeed *drop* her single mushroom, but she does *not* see it land; it merely disappears into the early morning. As a result, following Barad's description of nuclear contamination, the poem's "uncanny material topology" (116) embeds *three* simultaneous present moments into each other, all of which remain open. First, the speaker-mother prepares a meal in the presence of her child, the addressee of the poem. Secondly, the voice of the girl on the radio—an incisive object of mycelial interconnection if there ever was one—recounts her sister's death. Lastly, the speaker simulates the actions of an aircraft whose target is obscured by cloud cover, yet still drops its load "at dawn" (55), like the case of Kokura which set off the tragedy in Nagasaki. In each instance, the threat of future disturbance and disaster looms, both nearby (as sectarian violence in Northern Ireland) and distant (as nuclear aftermath in Japan). Still, Carr's poem, like Darcy's, avoids a dystopian vision by turning toward the future, nurturing, georgic-like, next season's 'crop.'

Responding to the Anthropocene: The Resonance of Virgil's Georgic Aesthetic

Each poem in this paper, by Mahon, Muldoon, Carr, Agee, Regan, and Darcy, poignantly demonstrates the lasting value of Virgil's georgic mode. As a didactic poem, the *Georgics* honors the nonhuman world for its scalability; from its atomic, to its cosmic structure, it holds multiple points of view simultaneously. Across wide-spread interactions, the genre deflects abstraction, in favor of immersion. Further, the georgic mode predicates that—despite the intrusion of violence upon the agricultural scene—a collaborative survival relies on the resilience of both humans and nonhumans. Indeed, Fairer refers to Virgil's epic as "Janus-faced," since "progress" co-exists with the precarity of potential "anarchy and conflict" ("Georgic" 462). Arising out of precariousness, then, the georgic poet channels a language of energetic engagement; thereby, the act of composing a poetic text mirrors the labors of the farmer (and the mushroom, itself).

As this paper has argued, these lyrical mushrooms hailing from Ireland and Northern Ireland offer readers particularly evocative examples of interrupted georgics that are both self-annihilating and self-rejuvenating. Herein, we witness an Anthropocene aesthetics of entanglement characterized not only by rupture, but also by symbiosis and dependency, where proximity balances distance. Additionally, this project along the fragile Irish border requires both a spatial sensitivity and a heightened sense of empathy, tasks well-suited to a poet. For instance, Ailbhe Darcy's embedded landscape in "Mushrooms," "bunkered down" and "snug on the deck" in "this cuckoo winter," full of news "dread-heavy with vortex," is more than a megaphone about environmental awareness. Rather, it mediates a landscape of blurred boundaries through its employment of georgic scalability: the human and the nonhuman embed in one another, such that mushrooms "grow on a person," making the human into "a vertical farm" (28-9). Thus,

Darcy's lyric establishes an interspecies companionship amid precarity, "shifting attention from crisis to care" (Reynolds 19). As a result, along with the other lyrics assembled here, it harmonizes with recent scholarship in *The New Irish Studies* (2020) that privileges interconnection between sites of solitary cultivation.

Submission received 25 January 2021

Revised version accepted 5 September 2021

Works Cited

- Agee, Chris. "Mushrooming." *The New North: Contemporary Poetry from Northern Ireland*, edited by Chris Agee, Salt, 2011, pp. 51-2.
- Barad, Karen. "No Small Matter: Mushroom Clouds, Ecologies of Nothingness, and Strange Topographies of Spacetime-mattering." *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts of the Anthropocene*, edited by Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan and Nils Bubandt, U of Minnesota P, 2017, pp. 103-120.
- Bishop, Elizabeth. "In the Waiting Room." *The Complete Poems: 1927-1979*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991, pp. 159-61.
- Brearton, Fran. "For Father Read Mother: Muldoon's Antecedents." *Paul Muldoon: Critical Essays*, edited by Tim Kendall and Peter McDonald, Liverpool UP, 2004, pp. 45-61.
- Carr, Ruth. "Mushroom." *There is a House*. Summer Palace Press, 1995, pp. 54-5.
- Darcy, Ailbhe. "Mushrooms." *Insistence*. Bloodaxe Books, 2018, pp. 28-9.
- Davis, Heather and Etienne Turpin. "Art & Death: Lives Between the Fifth Assessment & Sixth Extinction." *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, edited by Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, Open Humanities Press, 2015, pp. 3-30.
- Fairer, David. "Georgic." *The Oxford Handbook of British Poetry, 1960-1800*, edited by Jack Lynch, Oxford UP, 2016, pp. 457-72.
- . "The Pastoral-Georgic Tradition." *William Wordsworth in Context*, edited by Andrew Bennett, Cambridge UP, 2015, pp. 111-18.
- Fallon, Peter. "Translator's Note." *Georgics*, translated by Peter Fallon, Oxford UP, 2006, pp. xxiv-xxxvi.
- Frazier, Adrian. "Canon Fodder: Anthologies of Contemporary Irish Poetry." *Colby Quarterly*, Dec 1992.
- Goodman, Kevis. *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Meditation Of History*. Cambridge UP, 2004.
- Grennan, Eamon. "Derek Mahon: The Art of Poetry No. 82." *Paris Review*, issue 154, 2000, pp. 150-78.
- Heaney, Seamus. "Eclogue *In Extremis*: On the Staying Power of Pastoral." *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy Section C: Archeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature*, vol. 103, no. 1, 2003, pp. 1-12.
- . "Digging." *Selected Poems: 1966-1987*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1990, pp. 3-4.
- Horn, Eva and Hannes Bergthaller. *The Anthropocene: Key Issues for the Humanities*. Routledge, 2020.
- Longley, Edna. "War Pastorals." *The Oxford Handbook of British and Irish Poetry*, edited by Tim Kendall, Oxford UP, 2007, pp. 461-72.
- McDonald, Henry. "Man Shot Dead in South Belfast." *The Guardian*. 26 Feb. 2016. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.

- Mahon, Derek. "A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford." *New Selected Poems*. 1975. Faber & Faber, 2016, pp. 34-5.
- McKay Wilhelm, Robert. "The Plough—Chariot: Symbol of Order in the *Georgics*." *The Classical Journal*, vol. 77, no. 3, 1982, pp. 213-30.
- Muldoon, Paul. "Gathering Mushrooms." 1983. *Poems 1968-1998*. Faber & Faber, 2001, pp. 105-6.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. *After Fukushima: The Equivalence of Catastrophes*, translated by Charlotte Mandell, Fordham UP, 2015.
- Plath, Sylvia. "Morning Song." *The Collected Poems*, edited by Ted Hughes, Harper & Row, 1981, pp. 156-7.
- . "Mushrooms." *The Collected Poems*, edited by Ted Hughes, Harper & Row, 1981, pp. 139-40.
- Redmond, John. "Auden in Ireland." *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, edited by Peter Robinson, Oxford UP, 2013, pp. 424-441.
- Regan, Padraig. "Rehydrating Mushrooms." *Virginia Quarterly Review*, vol. 94, no. 4, 2018, p. 81.
- . Personal interview. 4 Jan 2021.
- Reynolds, Paige. "Introduction." *The New Irish Studies*, edited by Paige Reynolds, Cambridge UP, 2020, pp. 1-22.
- Ronda, Margaret. "Affect and Environment in Contemporary Eco-poetics." *Affect and Literature*, edited by Alex Houen. Cambridge UP, 2020, pp. 337-354.
- Sheldrake, Merlin. *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make our Worlds, Change our Minds, and Shape Our Futures*. Penguin, 2020.
- Solnick, Sam. *Poetry and the Anthropocene: Ecology, biology and technology in contemporary British and Irish Poetry*. Routledge, 2017.
- Stamets, Paul. "Six Ways Mushrooms Can Save the World." *Ted*, March 2008. Accessed 1 Dec 2020.
- Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton UP, 2015.
- . "Unruly Edges: Mushrooms as Companion Species." *Environmental Humanities*, vo. 1, Nov 2012, pp. 141-54.
- Tsing, Anna and Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan and Nils Bubandt, editors. *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts of the Anthropocene*. U of Minnesota P, 2017.
- Virgil. *Georgics*, translated by Peter Fallon, Oxford UP, 2006.
- Yeats, W.B. "Leda and the Swan." 1928. *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*, edited by Richard J. Finneran, Scribner, 1996, pp. 214-5.