

Fear of Irish Sons

— Of my father's father

I have this notion of you: Irish,
dirt under haphazard fingernails,
a solid stride I suppose. Life,
work, one and the same; humor
at any fool's expense, especially
your own. The flashing hands
of a leprechaun.

There are no pictures. No
black and white snaps of you
curling up on black tagboard;
no comments from my mother, like:
"That's him when your father
was seven or so," or "There he is
outside the parish in Cork —
or would it be Clare?"

My father straddles between us,
silent about you. Isn't it supposed
to make some difference
that I am his first son
as he was yours? He has always
been silent about you.

I etch age into his face. Ruts
that trace the grace of taking on
all comers: no questions, no
foolish twitch for answers.

I drain his hair white. I press his spine down
and stoop him over, trying to see you.
I break his knees to sit him down
in a fat, worn chair; drop his forehead to his fingers,
make him just bloody tired.
I fear for my first son.

Paul T Hogan
From Points of Departures, 2008