**Meditations upon an Egg**

1

The Egg’s no Chick by falling from the Hen;

Nor man a Christian, till he’s born agen.

The Egg’s at first contained in the Shell;

Men afore Grace, in sins, and darkness dwell.

The Egg when laid, by Warmth is made a Chicken;

And Christ, by Grace, those dead in sin doth quicken.

The Egg, when first a Chick, the shell’s its Prison;

So’s flesh to th’Soul, who yet with Christ is risen.

The Shell doth crack, the Chick doth chirp and peep;

The flesh decays, as men do pray and weep.

The Shell doth break, the Chick’s at liberty;

The flesh falls off, the Soul mounts up on high.

But both do not enjoy the self-same plight;

The Soul is safe, the Chick now fears the Kite.

2.

But Chick’s from rotten Eggs do not proceed;

Nor is an Hypocrite a Saint indeed.

The rotten Egg, though underneath the Hen,

If crack’d, stinks, and is loathsome unto men.

Nor doth her Warmth make what is rotten sound,

What’s rotten, rotten will at last be found.

The Hyppocrite, sin has him in Possession,

He is a rotten Egg under Profession.

3.

Some Eggs bring Cockatrices; and some men

Seem hatcht and brooded in the Vipers Den.

Some Eggs bring wild-Fowls; and some men there be

As wild as are the wildest Fowls that flee.

Some Eggs bring Spiders; and some men appear

More venom than the worst of Spiders are.

Some Eggs bring Piss ants; and some seem to me

As much for trifles as the Piss-ants be.

Thus divers Eggs do produce divers shapes,

As like some Men as Monkeys are like Apes.

But this is but an Egg, were it a Chick,

Here had been Legs, and Wings, and Bones to pick.

—John Bunyan

**[The green woodpecker flying up & down]**

The green woodpecker flying up and down

With wings of mellow green and speckled crown

She bores a hole in trees with crawking noise

And pelted down and often catched by boys

She makes a lither nest of grass and whool

Men fright her oft that go the sticks to pull

Ive up and clumb the trees with hook and pole

And stood on rotten grains to reach the hole

And as I trembled upon fear and doubt

I found the eggs and scarce could get them out

I put them in my hat a tattered crown

And scarcely without breaking brought them down

The eggs are small for such a bird they lay

Five eggs and like the sparrows spotted grey

—John Clare

**For Grace, After A Party**

You do not always know what I am feeling.

Last night in the warm spring air while I was

blazing my tirade against someone who doesn’t

interest

me, it was love for you that set me

afire,

and isn’t it odd? for in rooms full of

strangers my most tender feelings

writhe and

bear the fruit of screaming. Put out your hand,

isn’t there

an ashtray, suddenly, there? beside

the bed? And someone you love enters the room

and says wouldn’t

you like the eggs a little

different today?

And when they arrive they are

just plain scrambled eggs and the warm weather

is holding.

—Frank O’Hara

**Soft**

In harmony with the rule of irony—

which requires that we harbor the enemy

on this side of the barricade—the shell

of the unborn eagle or pelican, which is made

to give protection till the great beaks can harden,

is the first thing to take up poison.

The mineral case is soft and gibbous

as the moon in a lake—an elastic,

rubbery, nightmare water that won’t break.

Elsewhere, also, I see the mockeries of struggle,

a softness over people.

—Kay Ryan

**Eggs**

I was unpacking a dozen eggs

into the fridge when I noticed a hairline crack

at which I pecked

till at long last I squeezed

into a freshly whitewashed

scullery in Cullenramer. It was all hush-hush

where my mother’s mother took a potash rag

to a dozen new-laid eggs

and, balancing a basket on her bike,

pushed off for Dungannon. This was much

before the time a priest would touch

down from the Philippines with a clutch

of game bird eggs

and introduce a whole new strain of fighting cocks.

It would be midnight when my mother’s mother got back

from Dungannon, now completely smashed

on hard liquor bought with hard cash,

fuck you, cash on the barrel. It was all hush-hush

as she was taken from a truck

painted matter-of-factly MILK & EGGS

into which they’d bundled her, along with her bike,

for delivery to Cullenramer. It would be all hush-hush

next morning in the whitewashed

scullery where she wrung out the potash

rag and took it to another dozen or so new-laid eggs,

from any one of which I might yet poke

my little beak.

—Paul Muldoon